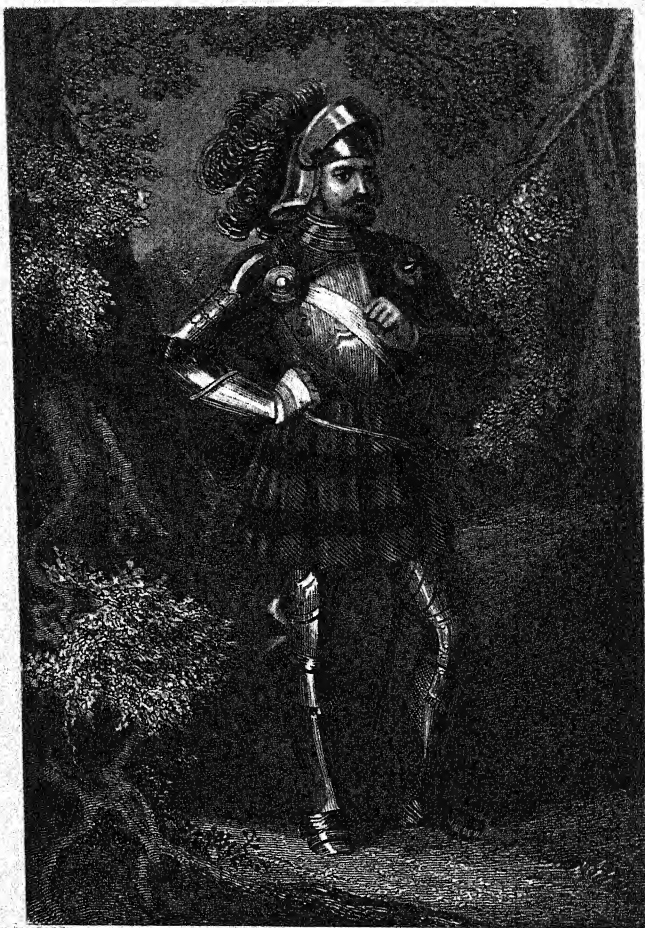


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GOETHE'S DRAMATIC WORKS.



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Goetz with the Iron hand.

THE DRAMATIC WORKS

OF

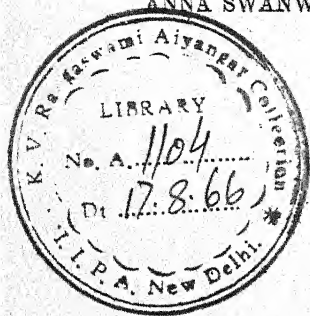
J. W. GOETHE.

Translated from the German.

BY

SIR WALTER SCOTT, E. A. BOWRING, C.B.,

ANNA SWANWICK, AND OTHERS.



LONDON:

GEORGE BELL AND SONS, YORK STREET,
COVENT GARDEN.

1888.

LONDON :

PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, LIMITED,

STAMFORD STREET AND CHANCING CROSS.

P R E F A C E.

THE publication in a separate volume of Miss Swanwick's translation of Faust (including the second part) has necessitated the rearrangement of the other dramatic pieces formerly published with Faust, and has enabled the publishers, by adding three others hitherto untranslated, to form a volume consisting entirely of Goethe's miscellaneous dramatic works.

The more important of the new pieces are the first two, which, written during Goethe's residence at Leipsig, are of much interest, as showing the great dramatic and literary ability which he had attained at an early age. The translation, kindly undertaken by Mr. Edgar Bowring, has well reproduced the flowing Alexandrine metre of the original.

Clavigo, the other new play, is chiefly interesting from the circumstances of its composition and its popularity upon the stage.

Of the remainder, Sir W. Scott's translation of Goetz von Berlichingen is of course unaltered, save for the correction of a few obvious errors; but the last three plays, Egmont, Tasso, and Iphigenia, have been very carefully revised for this edition by their accomplished translator, Miss Swanwick.

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THE WAYWARD LOVER.

A PASTORAL DRAMA IN VERSE AND IN ONE ACT.

TRANSLATED BY EDGAR A. BOWRING, C.E.

This little drama was written in the years 1767 and 1768, whilst Goethe, at the age of eighteen, was still a student at Leipsic. It commemorates his attachment to Katharina Schönkopf, the circumstances of which are illustrated by the characters of Eridon and Amina.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

EGLÉ.

ERIDON.

AMINA.

LAMON.

THE WAYWARD LOVER.

SCENE I.

AMINA and EGLE are sitting on one side of the theatre, making garlands. LAMON enters, bringing a basket of flowers.

LAMON (*putting down the basket*).

I've brought more flowers.

EGLE.

O thanks!

LAMON.

How fair they are! Just see!

This pink is thine.

EGLE.

The rose?—

LAMON.

Dear child, that's not for thee!

Amina shall to-day receive this flow'ret fair;
I think a rose looks best contrasted with black hair.

EGLE.

And this thou call'st polite, obliging in a lover?

LAMON.

For one who loves, thou'rt slow my nature to discover.
I'm perfectly aware, thou lovest only me,
And my true heart in turn will ever beat for thee;

Thou know'st it. Yet thou seek'st still stronger chains
than these?

Is it so wrong to think that other maids can please?

I let thee say: that youth is handsome, this one charming,

Or full of wit, and I see nothing there alarming,
But say so too.

EGLE.

Ne'er lose thy temper, nor will I.
Both make the same mistake. To words of flattery
Oft listen I, well pleased; soft words dost thou address,
When I'm not there to hear, to many a shepherdess.
The heart should never deem a little jesting hard:
'Gainst fickleness a mind that's cheerful is a guard.
I'm subject less than thou to jealousy's dominion.

(To AMINA.)

Thou smilest at us? Say, dear friend, what's thy opinion?

AMINA.

I've none.

EGLE.

And yet thou know'st I'm happy, whilst thou'rt sad.

AMINA.

How so?

EGLE.

How so! Instead of being, like us, glad,
And making all Love's sulks before your laughter fly,
Thy pain begins whene'er thy lover meets thine eye.
I never knew a more unpleasant, selfish creature.
Thou think'st he loves thee. No, I better know his
nature;
He sees that thou obey'st. The tyrant loves thee solely,
Because thou art a maid who will obey him wholly.

AMINA.

He oft obeys me too.

EGLE.

'To be still more thy master.
Thou watchest all his looks, for fear of some disaster;

The power that in our looks Dame Nature has install'd,
Whereby mankind are cow'd, and charmingly enthrall'd,
Hast thou to him transferr'd, and thou art happy now
If he looks only pleased. With deeply wrinkled brow,
Contracted eyebrows, eyes all wild and dark as night,
And tightly fasten'd lips, a very charming sight
Appears he ev'ry day, till kisses, tears, harangues
Disperse each wintry cloud that o'er his forehead hangs.

AMINA.

Thou know'st him not enough, thou never wert his lover;
It is not selfishness that clouds his forehead over.
A whimsical chagrin upon his bosom preys,
And spoils for both of us the finest summer days:
And yet I'm well content that when my voice he hears,
And all my coaxing words, each whim soon disappears.

EGLE.

A mighty bliss indeed, which one full well might spare!
But name one single joy that he allow'd thee e'er.
How throb'd thy breast, whene'er a dance appear'd in
view!

Thy lover flies the dance, and takes thee with him too.
No wonder he can't bear thy presence at a feast;
He hates the very glass touch'd by thee in the least.
As rivals deems he e'en the birds that chance to please thee;
How could he happy be, to see another seize thee,
And press thee to his heart, and whisper words of love,
As in the whirling dance before his eyes ye move?

AMINA.

Pray be not so unfair; without the least objection
He let me join this feast, with thee as my protection.

EGLE.

Thou'lt learn the truth soon.

AMINA.

How?

EGLE.

Now, wherefore comes he not?

AMINA.

He little loves the dance.

EGLE.

'Tis nothing but a plot.
If thou return'st well pleased, he'll ask thee in a trice:—
"You had a happy day?"—"Yes."—"That is very nice.
"You play'd?"—"At forfeits"—"Ah! was Damon also
there?"
"You danced?"—"Yes, round the tree"—"I fain had
seen the pair.
"He danced right well? And what reward received the
youth?"

AMINA (*smiling*).

Yes.

EGLE.

Smil'st thou?

AMINA.

Yes, my friend, that is his tone, in truth.—
More flowers!

LAMON.

The best are these.

AMINA.

It is with joy I see
How he the world doth grudge the slightest look from
me;
I in this envy see how deep my lover's love,
And this proud consciousness doth all my pangs remove.

EGLE.

I pity thee, poor child. No hope for thee remains,
Since thou thy mis'ry lov'st; thou dost but shake thy
chains,
And mak'st thyself believe 'tis music.

AMINA.

One ribbon still I need.

For this bow

EGLE (*to LAMON*).

A little time ago
Thou stolest one from me, at that last feast in May.

LAMON.

I'll fetch it.

EGLE.

Make good haste ; return without delay.

SCENE II.

EGLE, AMINA.

AMINA.

He sets but little store on what his love presented.

EGLE.

With his demeanor I myself am not contented.
For playful signs of love too little careth he,
Which please a feeling heart, however small they be.
And yet believe me, friend, the torment is far less
To be too little loved, than worshipp'd to excess.
Fidelity I prize ; 'tis that alone can give
With certainty true calm, to last us whilst we live.

AMINA.

Ah, friend ! indeed a heart thus tender is a prize.
'Tis true he grieves me oft, yet pities he my sighs.
If from his lips a sound of blame or wrath is heard,
I've nothing more to do than speak a kindly word,
And straightway he is changed, his anger disappears,
He even weeps with me, when he observes my tears,
Falls humbly at my feet, and begs me to forgive.

EGLE.

And thou forgivest him ?

AMINA.

Yes.

EGLE.

What a way to live !
The lover who offends, to go on pardoning ever !
Take pains to win his love, and be rewarded never !

AMINA.

What cannot e'er be changed——

EGLE.

Not changed? 'Twould easy be

To alter him.

AMINA.

How so?

EGLE.

I'll teach the way to thee.

The source of all thy griefs, the discontent oppressive
Of Eridon——

AMINA.

Is what?

EGLE.

Thy tenderness excessive.

AMINA.

I thought my plan would love reciprocal engender.

EGLE.

Thou'rt wrong; be harsh and cold, and thou wilt find
him tender.

Just try this course for once, make him some pain endure:
A man prefers to strive, he cares not to be sure.
If Eridon should come to spend with thee an hour,
He knows it but too well, thou'rt wholly in his power.
No rival is at hand, with whom to disagree,
He knows thou lovest him far more than he loves thee.
His bliss is far too great, he well deserves our laughter;
As he no pangs e'er feels, he needs must pangs run after.
He sees that in the world thou lovest him alone,
He doubts, because by thee no doubts are ever shown.
So treat him that he'll think thou carest little for him;
He'll storm indeed, but that will very soon pass o'er him.
One look from thee will then please more than now a kiss;
Make him afraid, and he will then soon know true bliss.

AMINA.

Yes, that is very well; but then I'm quite unable
To carry out thy plan.

EGLE.

Thy courage is unstable.
Go, thou art far too weak. Look there!

AMINA.

My Eridon?

EGLE.

I thought so. Ah, poor child! he comes, and thou anon
Dost shake with joy: that ne'er will do. To make him
change,
Thou must, when he appears, a calmer mien arrange;
That heaving of thy breast! Thy face, too, all aglow!
And then——

AMINA.

O let me be! Amina loves not so.

SCENE III.

ERIDON *advances slowly, with his arms crossed.* AMINA
arises, and runs to meet him. EGLE *continues sitting over
her work.*

AMINA (*taking him by the hand*).

My own dear Eridon!

ERIDON (*kissing her hand*).

My darling!

EGLE (*aside*).

Ah, how pleasant!

AMINA.

What flowers! Explain, my friend, who gave thee such
a present?

ERIDON.

Who? My own loved one.

AMINA.

What! My gift of yesterday,
As fresh as they were then?

ERIDON.

Whate'er thou givest, say,
Is it not dear to me? But those I gave thee?

AMINA.

I in this festal wreath have placed them.

O,

ERIDON.

Be it so!

Love in each young man's heart, and envy in each maid
Wilt thou excite.

EGLE.

Rejoice to find thy love repaid
By such a maiden's love, for which so many vie.

ERIDON.

I cannot happy be, to hear so many sigh.

EGLE.

Thou shouldst be; few men's lot with thine could e'er
compare.

ERIDON (*to AMINA*).

Now speak about the fête; will Damon, too, be there?

EGLE (*interrupting*).

That he would present be, I heard him say by chance.

ERIDON (*to AMINA*).

My child, and who will be thy partner in the dance?

(*As AMINA does not answer, he turns to EGLE.*)

Take care to choose for her the one she holds most dear.

AMINA.

That cannot be, my friend, since thou wilt not be near!

EGLE.

Now, hear me, Eridon, I cannot bear it more,
Strange pleasure is it, thus to plague Amina sore.
Forsake her, if thou think'st that she's no longer true,
But if thou think'st she loves, this course no more pursue.

ERIDON.

I never plague her.

EGLE.

No? How strange are all thy measures!
From jealousy to cast a gloom upon her pleasures,
To doubt, although the fact is known to thee full clearly,
If she——

ERIDON.

Wilt thou be bail that she doth love me dearly?

AMINA.

I love thee not?

ERIDON.

What proof hast thou at thy command?
Who let bold Damon steal a nosegay from her hand?
Who took that ribbon fair which youthful Thirsis
brought?

AMINA.

My Eridon!——

ERIDON.

All this was not a dream, methought.
And what was their reward? Thou kisses canst bestow!

AMINA.

Canst thou not, dearest, too?

EGLE.

O peace, he'll nothing know!
Whate'er there was to say, thou said'st it o'er and o'er,
He listens for a time, and then complains once more.
And what's the use? If thou his charges shouldst
disclaim,
He'll go away in peace, and next time do the same.

ERIDON.

With justice, too, perchance.

AMINA.

What! I unfaithful? O,
Amina false, my friend? Dost thou believe it?

ERIDON.

No!

I cannot, will not.

AMINA.

O,

I in this festal wreath have placed them.

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Amina false, my friend? Dost thou believe it?

ERIDON.

No!

I cannot, will not.

AMINA.

E'er give occasion?
Say, in all my life did I

ERIDON.

Thou dost oft a cause supply.

AMINA.

When was I faithless?

ERIDON.

Ne'er! Hence all these cares of mine:
Through levity thou err'st, and never by design.
As trifles thou dost hold the things I weighty deem;
The things that vex me most, to thee as nothing seem.

EGLE.

Well! If she deems them nought, where is the mischief,
pray?

ERIDON.

She often ask'd the same; it vexes me, I say.

EGLE.

What then? Amina ne'er forgets her own position.

ERIDON.

Too much to deem her true, too little for suspicion.

EGLE.

More than a woman's heart e'er loved, she loveth thee.

ERIDON.

And dances, pleasures, games, she loves as much as me.

EGLE.

Who cannot this endure, should only love our mothers!

AMINA.

Peace, Egle! Eridon, my joy thy language smothers.
Our friends will tell thee how I think of thee all day,
E'en when we're far from thee, and full of mirth and play;
How oft I with chagrin, that spoils my pleasure, cry,
"I wonder where he is!" because thou art not nigh.

If thou believ'st me not, O come to-day with me,
And settle for thyself if I'm untrue to thee.
I'll dance with thee alone, I'll never leave thy side,
This arm shall cling to thine, this hand in thine abide.
If my behaviour then the least mistrust should wake---

ERIDON.

To keep oneself in check, no proof of love can make.

EGLE.

Behold her falling tears! they're flowing in thy honor;
Ne'er thought I that thy heart so basely look'd upon her.
The boundless discontent, incessant and diseased,
Which ever asks for more, the more it is appeased,—
The pride which will not let within thy sight appear
The guileless joys of youth her bosom holds so dear,—
Within thy hateful heart alternately they reign,
Thou heedest not her love, thou heedest not her pain.
She's dear to me, and thou no more shalt treat her ill;
To fly thee, will be hard; to love thee, harder still.

AMINA (*aside*).

Ah, wherefore must my heart with love be flowing o'er!

ERIDON

(*standing still for a moment, and then timidly approaching
AMINA and taking her hand*).

Amina, dearest child! Canst thou forgive once more?

AMINA.

Have I not granted oft forgiveness full, complete?

ERIDON.

Thou noble, best of hearts, let me before thy feet---

AMINA.

Arise, my Eridon!

EGLE.

Thy many thanks withhold;
What one too warmly feels, will soon again grow cold.

ERIDON.

And all this warmth of heart with which I honor her——

EGLE.

A greater bliss would be, if somewhat less it were.
More calmly would ye live, and all her pain and thine——

ERIDON.

Forgive me once again, more wisdom shall be mine.

AMINA.

Dear Eridon, now go, a nosegay pick for me;
If gather'd by thy hand, how charming it will be!

ERIDON.

Thou hast a rose there now!

AMINA.

Her Lamon gave me this.
It suits me well.

ERIDON (*touchily*).

Indeed——

AMINA.

O take it not amiss,
And thou shalt have it, dear.

ERIDON (*embracing her, and kissing her hand*).

I'll bring thee flowers with speed.
(*Exit.*)

SCENE IV.

AMINA, EGLE. *Presently* LAMON.

EGLE.

O poor good-hearted child, this plan will ne'er succeed!
The more that it is fed, more hungry grows his pride.
Take heed, 'twill rob thee else of all thou lov'st beside.

AMINA.

One care alone I have, lest he should not be true.

EGLE.

How charming! One can see thy love is very new.
'Tis always so at first; when once one's heart is given,
One thinks of nothing else but love from morn till even.
If we, then, at this time a touching novel read,
How greatly this one loved, and that one, true indeed,
That hero soft of heart, so bold when dangers hover,
So mighty in the fight, because he was a lover,—
Our head 'gins whirling round, we deem it our own story,
We fain would wretched be, or cover'd o'er with glory.
A youthful heart soon takes impressions from a novel;
A loving heart still less inclines on earth to grovel;
And so we long time love, until we find that we,
Instead of being true, were fools to a degree.

AMINA.

Yet that is not my case.

EGLE.

A patient oft will tell
The doctor in a rage that he is sound and well.
Do we believe him? No. Despite his opposition,
His medicine he must take. And that is thy condition.

AMINA.

'Tis true of children, yes; but 'tis not true of me;
Am I a child?

EGLE.

Thou lov'st!

AMINA.

Thou too!

EGLE.

Yes, love as we!
First moderate the storm which hurries thee along!
One can be very calm, although one's love is strong.

LAMON.

Here is the ribbon!

AMINA.

Thanks!

EGLE.

Thou art a laggard wooer!

LAMON.

I was upon the hill when Chloris call'd me to her,
And made me deck her hat with flowers ere she dismiss'd
me.

EGLE.

And what was thy reward?

LAMON.

Mine? None; she only kiss'd me.
Whatever one may do, no maiden can afford
To give a greater prize than kisses in reward.

AMINA (*showing EGLE the wreath with the loop*).

Is all now right?

EGLE.

Yes, come!

(*She hangs the wreath on AMINA, so that the loop comes on the
right shoulder. In the mean time she talks to LAMON.*)

To-day right merry be!

LAMON.

Right noisy be to-day. We feel not half the glee
When we demurely meet, discussing in full quorum
Our loved one's whims, or else the duties of decorum.

EGLE.

Thou'rt very right.

LAMON.

O, yes!

EGLE.

Amina! Sit thou here!
(AMINA sits down. EGLE puts flowers in her hair, while she
continues.)

Come, give me back the kiss that Chloris gave thee, dear!

LAMON (*kissing her*).

Most gladly. Here it is.

AMINA.

How very strange ye are!

EGLE.

Were Eridon the same, thou wouldst be happier far.

AMINA.

He ne'er, instead of me, would kiss another maid.

LAMON.

Where is the rose?

EGLE.

When he attempted to upbraid,
She gave it him for peace.

AMINA.

I wish to be polite.

LAMON.

If thou dost pardon him, he'll pardon thee. Quite right!
Yes, each the other plagues in turn, I clearly see.

EGLE

(*As a sign that she is ready with the decoration for the head*).

There!

LAMON..

Good!

AMINA.

I wish the flowers were ready now for me
That Eridon should bring.

EGLE.

Do thou await him here.

I'll go and deck myself. Come also, Lamon, dear!
We'll leave thee here alone, but soon be back again.

SCENE V.

AMINA. (*Presently ERIDON.*)

What enviable bliss! O, what a tender swain!
How wish I that it but depended upon me
My Eridon content, myself made blest, to see!
Did I not to his hands such influence o'er me give,
Far happier he would be, and I in peace should live.
If to o'ercome this power I seeming coldness try,
At my indifference he'll into fury fly.
I know his wrath, and dread to feel it; thou, my heart,
Wouldst very badly play so difficult a part.
Yet, if thou wouldst succeed as fully as thy friend,
And, 'stead of serving him, his will to thine wouldst bend,
To-day's the very time; I never must allow
The chance to pass . . . He comes! My heart, take
courage now!

ERIDON (*giving her flowers*).

They're not so very good, my child! pray, pardon me,
I gather'd them in haste.

AMINA.

Enough, they are from thee.

ERIDON.

They're not so blooming quite, as those fair roses were
That Damon stole from thee.

AMINA (*placing them in her bosom*).

I'll keep them safely there.
There where thou art enshrined, these flowers should also
blow.

ERIDON.

If there alone they're safe——

AMINA.

Hast thou suspicions?——

ERIDON.

No!

I've none, my child; 'tis fear alone I feel to-day.
The best of hearts forgets, 'midst merry sport and play,
When happy in the dance, and at the noisy fête,
What duty may enjoin, and wisdom may dictate.
Thou may'st p'rhaps think of me, when in this joyous
vein,

Yet thou dost not attempt the freedom to restrain
Which youths allow themselves to practise, bit by bit,
If maidens but in jest a liberty permit.
Their idle pride presumes to treat as love ere long
A pleasant playful mien.

AMINA.

Enough, if they are wrong!

'Tis true that loving sighs pursue me by the score;
Yet thou dost hold my heart, and say, what wouldst thou
more?

Poor fellows! upon me thou mightest let them look;
They think that wonder——

ERIDON.

No, such thoughts I will not brook.

'Tis that that vexes me. Well know I thou art mine;
Yet one of them perchance the same thing may opine,
And gaze upon thine eyes, and think to give a kiss,
And triumph in the thought that he has spoil'd my bliss.

AMINA.

Destroy his triumph, then! Beloved one, with me go;
Let them the preference see which thou——

ERIDON.

I thank thee, no!

That sacrifice to claim would show a cruel will;
Thou, child, wouldst be ashamed of one who danced so ill;
I know whom in the dance as partner thou approvest:
The one who dances best, and not the one thou lovest.

AMINA.

That is the truth.

ERIDON (*with restrained irony*).

Ah, yes, I often have regretted
The gifts of Damaris, so light of foot, and petted!
How well he dances!

AMINA.

Yes, none like him in the dance.

ERIDON.

And each maid——

AMINA.

Prizes him——

ERIDON.

Adores him for't!

AMINA.

Perchance.

ERIDON.

Perchance? The devil! Yes!

AMINA.

What mean those strange grimaces?

ERIDON.

Thou ask'st? Thou'lt drive me mad. Thy conduct a disgrace is!

AMINA.

Mine? Art not thou the cause of my and thy great woe?
O cruel Eridon! How canst thou treat me so?

ERIDON.

I must; I love thee well. 'Tis love that makes me vex
thee.

Loved I not thee so much, I never should perplex thee.
My feeling, tender heart with ecstasy beats high,
When thy hand presses mine, when on me smiles thine
eye.

I thank the gods, who give such bliss without alloy,
Yet only I demand, that none shall share my joy.

AMINA.

Of what dost thou complain? No others share it now.

ERIDON.

Yet thou endurest them? No hatred feelest thou?

AMINA.

I hate them? Why should I?

ERIDON.

Because they dare to love thee.

AMINA.

A pretty ground!

ERIDON.

I see, thou lett'st their sighing move thee;
Their feelings thou must spare; and lessen'd is thy pleasure,
Unless thou——

AMINA.

Eridon's injustice knows no measure!
Does love require that we humanity should shun?
A heart that truly loves, can hate no other one.
This tender feeling ne'er with such base thoughts can dwell,
Never at least with me.

ERIDON.

Thou vindicatest well
The gentle sex's proud and high prerogative,
If twenty blockheads kneel, the twenty to deceive!
To-day's a day when pride may specially enfold thee,
To-day thou'lt many see, who as a goddess hold thee;
Full many a youthful heart will throb for thee right hard,
Thou'lt scarce find looks enough, thy servants to reward.
Remember me, when swarms of fools around thee run;
I am the greatest! Go!

AMINA (*aside*).

Fly, weak heart! He has won.
Ye gods, lives he for nought but to destroy my peace?
Must my distress still last, and never, never cease?

(To ERIDON.)

The gentle bonds of love thou turnest to a yoke;
A tyrant thou to me, yet I my love invoke!
With tenderness to all thy wrath have I replied,
I ever yield to thee, yet thou'rt not satisfied.
No sacrifice I've spared. Contented ne'er art thou.
My pleasure of to-day thou claim'st? Thou hast it now!
(*She takes the wreaths out of her hair and from her shoulder,
throws them away, and continues in a restrained calm voice.*)
Now say, dear Eridon! Thou lov'st me better so,
Than for the feast array'd? Thine anger now forego.
Thou wilt not look at me? Remains thy heart still
harden'd?

ERIDON (*falling down before her*).

Amina, thee I love! Be my vile conduct pardon'd!
Go to the feast.

AMINA.

My friend, with thee I'd sooner stay;
A loving song will serve to while the time away.

ERIDON.

Dear child, now go!

AMINA.

Go thou, and quickly fetch thy flute.

ERIDON.

Thou wilt'st it?

SCENE VI.

AMINA.

He seems sad, yet feels rejoicings mute.
In vain wilt thou on him thy tenderness bestow.
He feels my sacrifice? He little heeds it; no,
He deems it but his due. What wouldst thou, my poor
heart?
Thou murmurest in my breast. Deserved I all this
smart?
Yes, thou deserv'st it well! Thou see'st he never ceases
To torture thee, and yet thy love for him increases.

I will not bear it more. Hush! Ha, I hear the din
Of music there. My heart doth throb, my foot joins in.
I'll go! My troubled breast my misery proclaims!
How wretched do I feel! My heart with burning flames
Consumes. Off, to the feast! He will not let me move!
Unhappy maiden! See, this is the bliss of love!
(*She throws herself on a bank, and weeps; as the others enter,
she dries her eyes and rises.*)
Alas, they now approach! How can I face their jeers!

SCENE VII.

AMINA, EGLE, LAMON.

EGLE.

Make haste! The march begins! Amina! What! In
tears?

LAMON (*picking up the wreaths*).

The garlands?

EGLE.

What means this? Who tore them off? Confess!

AMINA.

Myself.

EGLE.

Wilt thou not go?

AMINA.

If he will let me, yes.

EGLE.

If who will let thee? Say, why talk in this mysterious
And unaccustom'd tone? Be not so shy and serious!
Is't Eridon?

AMINA.

Yes, he!

EGLE.

I thought that it was so.

Thou fool! and will thy wrongs ne'er make thee wiser
grow?

Thou hast a promise made that thou with him wilt stay,
And pass in tears and sighs such a delightful day?
He's flatter'd, child, when thou for all his whims thus
carest.

(*After a pause, whilst she makes signs to LAMON.*)
Yet thou far better look'st when thou the garland wearest.
Come, put it on! and hang the other o'er thee thus!
Thou'rt charming now.

(*AMINA stands with downcast eyes, and lets EGLE have her way. EGLE gives a sign to LAMON.*)

But, ah! 'tis fully time for us

To join the march.

LAMON.

Quite right! My dearest child, adieu!

AMINA (*sorrowfully*).

Farewell!

EGLE (*departing*).

Amina! now, wilt thou not join us too?
(*AMINA looks at her sadly, and is silent*).

LAMON (*taking EGLE by the hand to lead her off*).

O leave her to herself! With spite I'm fit to die;
The charming dance she'll spoil with her perversity!
The dance both right and left, she knows it all by heart;
I fully thought that she would take her proper part.
She'll stop at home now! Come, I've nothing more to say.

EGLE.

Thou dost forego the dance! I pity thee to-day.
He dances well! Good-bye!

(*EGLE seeks to kiss AMINA. AMINA falls on her neck, and weeps*).

AMINA.

Complete is my dismay.

EGLE

Thou weep'st?

AMINA.

My sadden'd heart in grief despairing sinks!
I fain would . . . Eridon, I hate thee now, methinks!

EGLE.

He merits it. But, no! A lover who e'er hated?
Love him thou shouldst, not let thyself be subjugated.
I long have told thee this. Come!

LAMON.

Join the dance with me!

AMINA.

And Eridon?

EGLE.

Now go! I'll stay. He'll yield, thou'lt see,
And join thee. Say, would this afford thee any pleasure?

AMINA.

Immense!

LAMON.

Now come! Dost hear the shawm's soft dulcet measure?
The charming melody?

(He takes AMINA by the hand, and sings and dances.)

EGLE (*sings*).

If ever a lover with jealousy vile
Annoys thee, complains of a nod or a smile,
Accuses of falsehood or other invention,
Then sing thou, and dance thou, and pay no attention.
(LAMON carries AMINA off with him to the dance.)

AMINA (*as she goes*).

Fail not in thy persuasion!

SCENE VIII.

EGLE, and presently ERIDON with a flute and songs.

EGLE.

'Tis well! We soon shall see! I long have sought
occasion

This shepherd to convert, and make his ways more courtly.
To-day's my wish fulfill'd; I'll teach thee manners shortly!
I'll show thee who thou art; and at the least suggestion—
He comes! List, Eridon!

ERIDON.

Where is she?

EGLE.

What a question!

With Lamon yonder, where thou hear'st the cornets blow.

ERIDON (*throwing his flute on the ground, and tearing the songs*).

Vile infidelity!

EGLE.

Art mad?

ERIDON.

I should be so.*

The hypocrite first tears the garlands from her brow
With smiling face, and says: I will not dance, dear, now!
Did I insist on that? And . . . O!

(*He stamps with his foot, and throws the torn songs away.*)

EGLE (*in a composed voice*).

Let me enquire:

What right hast thou to make her from the dance retire?
Thou wishest that a heart, which with thy love is fill'd,
Should know no other joys than those by thee instill'd?
Dost think all impulses for pleasure are suppress'd,
As soon as thoughts of love pervade a maiden's breast?
Enough, if she to thee her dearest hours will give,
On thee, when absent, think, with thee would ever live.
'Tis folly then, my friend, in grief to make her dwell;
So let her love the dance, and games, and thee as well.

ERIDON (*dropping his arms and looking up*).

Ah!

EGLE.

Tell me, dost thou deem that any love is shown
By keeping her with thee? 'Tis slavery alone.

* This line in the original contains the only false Alexandrine in the play.—E. A. B.

Thou comest: at the fête no other she may see;
Thou goest: and forthwith she needs must go with thee;
She lingers: straightway thou dost give her looks unkind;
She follows thee, but oft her heart is left behind.

ERIDON.

P'rhaps always!

EGLE.

People hear, when bitter words are said,
There where no freedom is, all joys will soon be dead.
Thus are we made. A child a few words may have sung;
You bid him sing away. He starts and holds his tongue.
If thou her freedom leav'st, her love thou'st forfeit ne'er;
If thou behav'st too ill, she'll hate thee; so beware!

ERIDON.

She'll hate me?

EGLE.

Rightly too. Then seize a day like this,
And for thyself procure love's tenderness and bliss!
None but a tender heart, by its own glow impell'd,
Can constant be, by love incessantly upheld.
Confess now, canst thou tell if any bird is true,
When kept within a cage?

ERIDON.

No!

EGLE.

If, with freedom new
It flies o'er gardens, fields, and yet to thee returns?

ERIDON.

Quite right, I understand!

EGLE.

What rapture in thee burns,
To see the little thing, which loves thee tenderly,
Its freedom know, and yet the preference give to thee!
And if thy maiden e'er, excited by the dance,
From any fête comes back, and seeks thee, while each
glance

Betrays that all her joys imperfect bliss supply,
While thou, her lover, thou, her own one, art not by;
If she will then declare one kiss of thine to be
More than a thousand fêtes: who would not envy thee?

ERIDON (*moved*).

O Egle!

EGLE.

Tremble lest the gods should take amiss
That one so blest as thou so little knows his bliss!
Up! Be contented, friend! Or they'll the tears that flow
From that poor maid, avenge.

ERIDON.

Could I accustom'd grow,
To see how in the dance her hands so many press,—
While this one ogles her, she looks at that one! Yes,
When I on this reflect, my heart feels like to break!

EGLE.

What nonsense! What a fuss for trifles thou dost make!
There's nothing in a kiss!

ERIDON.

A kiss is nought, say'st thou?

EGLE.

Methinks that in his heart there is some feeling now,
If thus he talks.—But say, wilt thou forgive her, friend?
For when thou art displeased, her sorrow knows no end.

ERIDON.

Ah, friend!

EGLE (*flatteringly*).

This will not do! Thou also art a lover.
Farewell! (*She takes him by the hand*).
Thou'rt all aglow!

ERIDON.

My blood is boiling over——

EGLE.

With anger still? Enough! Thy pardon now has she.
I'll hasten to her straight. She'll trembling ask for thee;
I'll tell her: he is kind; composure this will give her,
Her heart will softer beat, she'll love thee more than ever.

(She looks at him sentimentally.)

She'll surely seek thee out, when ended is the feast,
And by the search itself her love will be increased.
(EGLE affects still more tenderness, and leans upon his shoulder.

He takes her hand and kisses it.)

She'll find thee presently! O what a moment this!
Press her against thy breast, and feel thy perfect bliss!
A maid, when dancing, looks more fair, her cheeks are
glowing,
Her mouth is wreath'd with smiles, her loosen'd locks are
flowing

Over her heaving breast, more tender charms enhance
The beauties of her form, when whirling in the dance;
Her throbbing pulses glow, and as her body sways,
Each nerve appears to thrill and greater life displays.
(She pretends to feel a tender rapture, and sinks upon his
breast, whilst he places his arm around her waist.)

The bliss of seeing this, what rapture can excel?
Thou'lt go not to the fête, and therefore canst not tell.

ERIDON.

Dear friend, upon thy breast I feel it all too well!

*(He falls upon EGLE'S neck and kisses her, whilst she offers
no resistance. She then steps back a few paces, and asks
in an indifferent tone)*

Lov'st thou Amina?

ERIDON.

As myself!

EGLE.

Yet darest thou

To kiss me? Thou shalt pay the penalty, I vow!
Thou faithless man!

ERIDON.

But what? Dost thou suppose that I——

EGLE.

Yes, I suppose it all. My friend, right tenderly
Thou kissedst me, 'tis true. Therewith I'm well content.
Was my kiss good? No doubt; thy hot lips prove assent,
And ask for more. Poor child! Amina, wert thou here!

ERIDON.

I would she were!

EGLE.

How vain! She'd wretched be, poor dear!

ERIDON.

Ay, she would scold me well. Thou must betray me not.
I've kiss'd thee, but that kiss will hurt her not a jot;
And if Amina gives me kisses most enchanting,
May I not feel that thine in rapture are not wanting?

EGLE.

Best ask herself.

SCENE IX.

AMINA, EGLE, ERIDON.

ERIDON.

Woe's me!

AMINA.

I long to see him so!

My own dear Eridon! 'Twas Egle made me go.
Alas, I broke my word; my friend, I'll go not now.

ERIDON (*aside*).

Wretch that I am!

AMINA.

Thou'rt wroth? Thy face avertest thou?

ERIDON (*aside*).

What can I say?

AMINA.

Alas! Is all this anger due
For such a little fault? Thou'rt in the right, 'tis true,
And yet——

EGLE.

O let him go! He gave me such a kiss!
And likes it still.

AMINA.

Kiss'd thee?

EGLE.

Right tenderly!

AMINA.

Ah, this

Too much is for my heart! Thy love is thus unsteady?
Unhappy I! My friend deserteth me already!
Who kisses other maids, his own will shortly fly.
Ah! since I thee have loved, like this ne'er acted I;
To try to reach my lips, no youth has been so daring;
E'en when I forfeits play'd, my kisses have been sparing.
My heart as much as thine is plagued by jealousy,
Yet I'll forgive thee all, if thou wilt turn to me!
And yet, poor heart, in vain art thou so well protected!
No love for me he feels, since he thy wiles suspected.
The mighty advocate for thee in vain doth plead.

ERIDON.

What loving tenderness! How vast my shame indeed!

AMINA.

My friend, O how couldst thou seduce away my lover?

EGLE.

Be comforted, good child! Thy woes will soon be over.
Well know I Eridon, and know that he is true.

AMINA.

And has——

EGLE.

Ay, thou art right, and he has kiss'd me too.
I know how it occur'd; his fault thou may'st condone.
How deeply he repents!

ERIDON (*falling down before AMINA*).

Amina! O my own!
O blame her! she appear'd so pretty when I kiss'd,
Her mouth was very close, and I could not resist.
Yet, if thou know'st me well, thou pardon must impart;
A little joy like that will not despoil my heart.

EGLE.

Amina, kiss him, since he answers so discreetly!
Despite those little joys, ye love each other sweetly.

(*To ERIDON.*)

My friend, thou on thyself must judgment pass this time;
Although she loves the dance, thou see'st that is no crime.

(*Mocking him.*)

If in the dance a youth her hand may chance to press,—
While this one ogles her, she looks at that one,—yes,
Of even this, thou know'st, thou ought'st not to complain.
I trust that thou wilt ne'er Amina plague again.
Methinks thou'lt with us go.

AMINA.

Come, join the fête.

ERIDON.

I will;

A kiss has been my cure.

EGLE (*to AMINA*).

Thou'lt take that kiss not ill.
Should jealousy again his bosom seek to kindle,
Remind him of that kiss, and 'twill to nothing dwindle.—
And O ye jealous ones, if maidens plague you e'er,
Recall *your own* false tricks, and blame them, if ye dare.

THE FELLOW-CULPRITS.

A COMEDY IN VERSE AND IN THREE ACTS.

TRANSLATED BY EDGAR A. BOWRING, C.B.

This clever comedy, like the preceding piece, was written during Goethe's residence at Leipsic, but it was touched up and improved at intervals, during subsequent years, until it was printed in his collected works. That its author considered it of some importance, is shown by the fact that it was one of the plays acted by the amateur company at the Court of Weimar.

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17.8.66

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

The Host.

ALCESTES.

SOPHIA, *his daughter.*

A WAITER.

SÖLLER, *her husband.*

The Scene is in the Inn.

THE FELLOW-CULPRITS.

ACT I.

SCENE I. *The Inn Parlor.*

SÖLLER, *in a domino at a table, with a bottle of wine before him.* SOPHIA, *opposite him, sewing a white feather on to a hat.* The HOST *enters.* *At the back of the stage is a table with pen, ink, and paper. A large easy-chair is near it.*

HOST.

Another ball! My son, I'm sick of all this riot;
I thought that by this time you'd like a little quiet.
I certainly ne'er gave my daughter's hand to you,
To see my hard-won cash so recklessly run through.
I'm getting old, and sought my forces to recruit;
Assistance wanted I, and so allow'd your suit;
A nice assistance yours, to waste each little earning!

(SÖLLER *hums a tune to himself*).

Yes, sing away! You'll soon another song be learning!
A good-for-nothing chap, whose folly few men's matches,
Plays, drinks, tobacco smokes, and plots of all kinds hatches!
You revel all the night, are half the day in bed,
No prince throughout the land an easier life e'er led.
There the adventurer sits, with spreading sleeves. Ha! ha!
The king of coxcombs he!

SÖLLER (*drinks*).

I drink your health, papa!

HOST.

You drink my health indeed! Enough to give me fever!

SOPHIA.

My father, pray be kind!

SÖLLER (*drinks*).

Soph, happy be for ever!

SOPHIA.

Be happy! Ah, could I but see you two agree!

HOST.

Unless he changes much, that certainly can't be.
I've long indeed been sick of these disputes eternal,
But while he thus behaves, the nuisance is infernal!
He is a wicked man, cold, thankless to the last;
He sees not what he is, remembers not the past;
The poverty from which I saved him, he forgets,
And my munificence in paying all his debts.
Distress, repentance, time no change in him have wrought;
The man who's once a scamp is always good for nought.

SOPHIA.

He'll surely change some day.

HOST.

He little hurry shows.

SOPHIA.

'Tis but the way of youth.

SÖLLER (*drinks*).

To all we love, here goes!

HOST.

In at one ear, forsooth, and at the other out!
He doesn't hear me. I a cipher am, no doubt.

I now for twenty years an honor'd life have led;
What I have saved, you hope to make your own instead,
And bit by bit consume? If this is what you're at,
You're much mistaken, friend! 'Tis not so bad as that!
Long has endured, and long will still last my vocation;
The host of the Black Bear is known throughout creation.
No foolish Bear is he, his skin he looks to well;
My house is painted now, I call it an hotel.
Soon cavaliers will come, and gold will fall in showers;
We none must idle be, or waste in drink our hours.
To bed at twelve o'clock, up soon as it is day,
That's it!

SÖLLER.

All this, just now, is pretty far away.
May things go on as now, and never get less steady!
Where are our many guests? The rooms above are ready.

HOST.

Few travel at this time; the house will fill up soon;
Has Squire Alcestes not two rooms and the saloon?

SÖLLER.

That's nothing, yes; a right good customer is he;
Yet sixty minutes good in ev'ry hour there be,
And Squire Alcestes knows why he is here.

HOST.

Knows why?

SÖLLER.

But, apropos, papa! To-day informed was I:
A corps of brave young folks in Germany's preparing
To help America, both gold and succor bearing;
If they get men enough, and courage for the mission,
Next spring, 'tis said, they'll start upon their expedition.

HOST.

Yes, oft I've heard them boast, as they a bottle share,
What wonders they would do for my compatriots there;
Then freedom was the cry, vast valor they affected,
But when the morning came their vows none recollected.

SÖLLER.

Ah, there are chaps enough, who're always gushing over;
There's one not far from you who is an ardent lover;
Would he romantic be, or aim at the sublime,
With head well placed in front, he'll scour the world in
time.

HOST.

If from our customers that one would take a hint,
'Twould be so nice, and he could write us, without stint,
Such letters! What a joke!

SÖLLER.

'Tis deuced far from here.

HOST.

What matters that? In time the letters would appear.
I'll go upstairs at once, and with the map's assistance,
That's in the little room, I'll soon find out the distance.

SCENE II.

SOPHIA, SÖLLER.

SÖLLER.

One's pretty well off here, when one can read the papers.

SOPHIA.

Yes, let him have his way.

SÖLLER.

I'm calm, and have no vapors;
'Tis well for him indeed! Was ever such a bully!

SOPHIA.

I pray you —

SÖLLER.

No! I needs must speak my mind out fully!
A year ago was I, as I can ne'er forget,
A traveller here by chance, head over ears in debt——

SOPHIA.

My dear, be not so cross!

SÖLLER.

Those thoughts will still molest me,
And yet Sophia found she didn't quite detest me.

SOPHIA.

You leave me ne'er in peace, reproaching night and day.

SÖLLER.

I don't reproach you, dear; 'tis but my little way.
A pretty woman ne'er can be by man held hateful,
Whatever may betide! You see I'm not ungrateful.
Sophia pretty is, and I am not of stone;
'Tis my delight that you now me as husband own;
I love you——

SOPHIA.

Yet you ne'er allow a moment's bliss.

SÖLLER.

There's nothing in it, love! But I can tell you this:
Alcestes loved you well, for you with love did burn,
You long have known him too, and loved him in return.

SOPHIA.

Ah!

SÖLLER.

No, don't be disturb'd, I see no evil there;
If we should plant a tree, it shoots up in the air,
And when it brings forth fruit, who happens to be by
Will eat it, and next year there's more. Sophia, I
Know you too well to feel the least annoyance after.
I find it laughable.

SOPHIA.

I see no cause for laughter.

"Alcestes loved me well, for me with love did burn,
I long have known him too, and loved him in return."
What's after that?

SÖLLER.

Why nought! I never said in truth
That more remains behind. For in her early youth,
When first a maiden blooms, she loves in make-believe;
A something stirs her heart, but what, she can't conceive.
At forfeits she will kiss; she presently grows bigger,
The kiss still nicer is, impress'd with greater vigor.
She knows not why she now her mother's blame incurs;
'Tis virtue when she loves, she's guileless when she errs.
And if experience comes her other gifts to swell,
And makes a prudent wife, her husband likes it well.

SOPHIA.

You understand me not.

SÖLLER.

I only meant to quiz;
What drinking is to men, a kiss to maidens is;
One glass, and then one more, till on the ground we sink.
If we would sober keep, the plan is—not to drink!
Enough that you are mine!—Is't not three years and more
Since Squire Alcestes here was guest and friend before?
How long was he away?

SOPHIA.

Three years, I think.

SÖLLER.

And now
He's been a fortnight here this time——

SOPHIA.

My love, I vow
I know not what you mean.

SÖLLER.

'Tis only conversation;
'Tween man and wife there is so little explanation.
But wherefore is he here?

SOPHIA.

For pleasure, I suppose.

SÖLLER.

Perchance his heart for you with love still overflows.
If he still loves, would you still treat him as before?

SOPHIA.

Love's capable of much, but duty is of more.
You think?—

SÖLLER.

I nothing think; and understand the saying:
A man's worth more than fops, who live by fiddle-playing.
The sweetest tunes we hear in any shepherd's song
Are only tunes, and tunes the palate cloy ere long.

SOPHIA.

'Tis well to talk of tunes. Does yours sound much more
gaily?

The state of discontent in which you live grows daily.
No moment in the day is from your teasing free;
If folks would be beloved, they loveable must be.
And were you quite the man, happy to make a maiden?
Why should I always be with your reproaches laden
For what is nothing? Yes, the house is near a crash,
You will not do a stroke, and only spend the cash.
You live from hand to mouth; your debts are always many,
And when your wife wants aught, she cannot get a penny,
And you won't take the pains to earn it for her. Yes,
Be a good man, would you a worthy wife possess!
Help her to pass her time, and what she needs, obtain,
And as concerns the rest, you may in peace remain.

SÖLLER.

Speak to your father, then!

SOPHIA.

That's what I've done quite lately.
There's many a thing we want, and trade has suffer'd
greatly.
I asked him yesterday to hand me something over:
"What," cried he, "you no cash, and Söller there in
clover!"

He gave me nothing, swore, with much abuse behind it.
Now tell me, please, where you expect that I shall find it?
You're not a man who e'er would for his wife feel sorrow.

SÖLLER.

O wait, dear child, perchance I shall receive to-morrow
From a good friend——

SOPHIA.

O yes, from one who is a ninny!
I often hear of friends prepared to lend their guinea,
But when we want the gold, I never see that friend.
No, Söller, you must know that game is at an end!

SÖLLER.

You have what needful is——

SOPHIA.

I know what you are at;
But those who ne'er were poor need something more than
that.
The gifts of fortune oft to spoil us are inclined;
We have what needful is, yet fancy her unkind.
The pleasure maidens love, and women too,—that joy
I neither hunger for, nor do I find it cloy.
Fine dresses, balls! Enough, I am a woman true.

SÖLLER.

Then go with me to-day. That's what I say to you.

SOPHIA.

That like the carnival our mode of life may be,
A revel for a time, that's ended suddenly!
I'd sooner sit alone whole years together here.
If you will nothing save, your wife must save,—that's
clear.
Enough already is my father's indignation:
I calm his wrath, and am his only consolation.
No! with my money, sir, you shall not make so free:
A little save yourself, and something spend on me!

SÖLLER.

My child, for just this once allow me to be merry;
When comes the time for mass, we'll then be serious,—very.

A WAITER enters.

Squire Söller!

SÖLLER.

Well, what now?

WAITER.

Here's Herr von Tirinette!

SOPHIA.

The gambler?

SÖLLER.

Send him off! Could I his name forget!

WAITER.

See you he must, he says.

SOPHIA.

What can he want with you?

SÖLLER.

He's leaving here—*(to the WAITER)*—I'll come!*(to SOPHIA.)* He wants to say adieu.*(Exit.)*

SCENE III.

SOPHIA *(alone)*.

He comes to dun him! Yes, his money's lost at play;
He's ruining us all, and I must bear it! Say,
Is this where all thy joys, thy dreams of pleasure are?
The wife of such a man! Hast thou gone back so far?
Where is the vanish'd time, in which the youngsters
sweet

In troops were wont to pay their homage at thy feet?
When each one sought to read his fate within thine eyes?
In affluence I stood, a goddess from the skies!
The servants of my whims all watchful round me press'd;
It was enough to fill with vanity my breast.

And, ah! a maiden is in evil case, in truth!
 If she is pretty, she is ogled by each youth;
 All day her head's confused by praises loud and strong;
 What maiden can withstand such fiery trial long!
 Ye could so nobly act, one thinks your word enough,
 Ye men! But all at once the devil takes you off;
 When ye can taste by stealth, all join the feast instanter;
 But if a girl's in love, ye vanish in a canter!
 Thus gentlemen themselves in these hard times amuse,
 Some twenty disappear, and half a one then woos.
 I found myself at last not utterly pass'd o'er,
 But chances fewer grow, when one is twenty-four.
 Then Söller came, and soon accepted was by me;
 He's an unworthy wretch, but still a man is he.
 Here sit I now, and might as well be in my grave.
 Admirers by the score I still, indeed, might have,
 But what would be the use? If haply they are silly,
 They would but breed ennui, and bore me, willy-nilly;
 And dang'rous 'tis to love, suppose your friend is clever:
 He'll to your detriment his cleverness turn ever.
 When love was absent, I for no attentions cared,—
 And now,—O my poor heart, wert thou for this prepared?
 Alcestes has return'd. Ah, what new torment this!
 To see him formerly!—ay, those were days of bliss!
 How loved I him!—And yet—I know not what I will!
 I shun him timidly, he is reserved and still;
 I am afraid of him; my fear is fully grounded.
 Ah, knew he that my heart still throbs with love un-
 bounded!
 He comes. I tremble now. My breast feels anguish new;
 I know not what I will, still less, what I should do.

SCENE IV.

SOPHIA, ALCESTES.

ALCESTES (*dressed, but without hat and sword*).

Your pardon, ma'am, I pray, if I appear intrusive.

SOPHIA.

You're joking, sir; you know this room is not exclusive.

ALCESTES.

I feel that you no more to others me prefer.

SOPHIA.

I do not understand how that can hurt you, sir.

ALCESTES.

You do not, cruel one? Can I survive your ire?

SOPHIA.

Excuse me, if you please; I fear I must retire.

ALCESTES.

O where, Sophia, where?—You turn your face away,
Withdraw your hand? Have you no mem'ry left to-day?
Behold. Alcestes 'tis! A hearing he entreats.

SOPHIA.

Alas, how my poor heart with wild excitement beats!

ALCESTES.

If you're Sophia, stay!

SOPHIA.

In mercy, spare me, spare me!

I must, I must away!

ALCESTES.

Sophia, can't you bear me?
O cruel one! Methought: she now is quite alone;
This is the very time to have some kindness shown.
I hoped that she could speak one friendly word to me.
But go now, go! 'Twas in this very room that she
The ardor of her love to me discover'd first;
'Twas here that into flames our mutual passion burst.
Upon this very spot,—remember you no more?—
Eternal faith you pledged!—

SOPHIA.

O spare me, I implore!

ALCESTES.

I never can forget,—the ev'ning was enchanting,
Your eyes spoke out, and I in ardor was not wanting.
Your lips against my lips you tremblingly did press,
My heart still deeply feels that utter happiness!
Your only joy was then to see or think of me;
And now, for me not e'en one hour will you keep free.
You see me seek for you, you see how I am sad,—
Go, false heart, go! you ne'er for me affection had.

SOPHIA.

You torture me, when now my heart enough oppress'd is?
You dare to say that I have never loved Alcestes?
You were my one sole wish, my greatest joy were you;
For you my blood was stirr'd, for you my heart beat true,
And this good heart which I did then to you surrender,
Must still remember you, can never be untender.
I'm often troubled still with all this recollection;
As fresh as it was then, remaineth my affection.

ALCESTES.

You angel! Dearest heart! (*He attempts to embrace her.*)

SOPHIA.

There's some one coming now.

ALCESTES.

What, not one single word? I ne'er can this allow!
Thus the whole day is spent! How wretched is my lot!
I've been a fortnight here, to you have spoken not.
I know you love me still, but this I painful find:
We never are alone, we ne'er can speak our mind.
Not for one moment e'er this room in peace abides,
Sometimes your father 'tis, your husband then besides.
I shall not stay here long, I can endure it never.
All things are possible to those who will, however.
Once you were always prompt, expedients to devise;
And jealousy was blind, though with a hundred eyes.
And if you only——

SOPHIA.

What?

ALCESTES.

Would bear in mind that ne'er
Alcestes must by you be driven to despair!
Beloved one, do not fail to seek a fitting spot
For private converse, since this place affords it not.
But hark! this very night goes out your worthy spouse.
'Tis thought I too shall join a carnival-carouse.
The back door to my stairs is quite adjacent, so
No person in the house of my return will know.
The keys are in my hands, and if you'll me receive——

SOPHIA.

Alcestes, I'm surprised——

ALCESTES.

And am I to believe
That you're no woman false? that still your heart is
mine?
The only means that yet are left us, you decline?
Know you Alcestes not? And can you still delay
During the night one hour to while with him away?
Enough! Sophia, I to-night may visit you?
Or, if it safer seems, you'll come to me? Adieu!

SOPHIA.

This is too much!

ALCESTES.

Too much! A pretty way to speak!
The deuce! too much! too much! Am I week after week
To waste for nothing here?—Damnation! why remain
If you don't care? I'll go to-morrow off again.

SOPHIA.

Beloved one! Best one!

ALCESTES.

Ay, my grief you see and know,
And you remain unmoved! I'll hence for ever go.

SCENE V.

THE ABOVE. THE HOST.

HOST.

A letter, sir ; from some great person, I opine ;
The seal is very large ; the paper, too, is fine.

(ALCESTES tears open the letter.)

HOST (*aside*).

What's in this letter, I should vastly like to know !

ALCESTES (*who has read the letter through hastily*).

To-morrow morning hence full early I must go.
The bill !

HOST.

To start off thus, at such a time of rain,
The letter must indeed important news contain !
May I perchance presume to ask your Honour why ?

ALCESTES.

No !

HOST (*to SOPHIA*).

Ask him ; he to you will certainly reply.
(*He goes to the table at the bottom of the stage, where he takes
his books out of the drawer, sits down, and makes out the
bill.*)

SOPHIA.

Alcestes, is it so ?

ALCESTES.

Her coaxing face, just see !

SOPHIA.

Alcestes, I entreat, depart not thus from me !

ALCESTES.

Make up your mind at once to see me, then, to-night

SOPHIA (*aside*).

What shall—what can I do! He must not leave my sight;
My only joy is he——

(*Aloud.*)

You see, I never can——

Remember, I'm a wife.

ALCESTES.

The devil take the man!

You'll be a widow then! These passing hours employ;
Perchance they'll be the last, as well as first, of joy!
One word! At midnight, then, my love, I shall appear!

SOPHIA.

My father's chamber is to mine so very near.

ALCESTES.

Well; then, you'll come to me! Why this consideration?
The moments fly away 'midst all your hesitation.
Here, take the keys.

SOPHIA.

My key will open ev'ry door.

ALCESTES.

Then come, my darling child! Why trifle any more?
Now, will you?

SOPHIA.

Will I?

ALCESTES.

Well?

SOPHIA.

Yes, I will come to you.

ALCESTES (*to the Host*).

Mine host, I shall not go!

HOST (*advancing.*)

Good!

(*To SOPHIA*) Wherefore this ado?

Nought will he say.

SOPHIA.

HOST.

What, nought?

SCENE VI.

THE ABOVE. SÖLLER.

ALCESTES.

My hat!

SOPHIA.

There lies it! here!

ALCESTES.

Adieu, I must be off.

SÖLLER.

I wish you, sir, good cheer!

ALCESTES.

Fair madam, fare you well!

SOPHIA.

Farewell!

SÖLLER.

Your humble servant!

ALCESTES.

I first must go upstairs.

SÖLLER (*aside*).

Each day he grows more fervent.

HOST (*taking a light*).

Allow me, sir.

ALCESTES (*taking it politely out of his hand*).

Good host, indeed I can't consent!

(*Exit.*)

SOPHIA.

Well, Söller, you are off! How if I also went?

SÖLLER.

Aha! you now would fain——

SOPHIA.

No, go! I spoke in jest.

SÖLLER.

No, no! I understand this longing in your breast
If one a person sees, who's going to a ball;
While one must go to bed, full hard 'tis, after all.
There'll be another soon.

SOPHIA.

O yes, to wait I'm able.
Now, Söller, be discreet, and shun the gaming-table.
(*To the Host, who has meanwhile been standing in deep thought.*)

And now, good night, papa! I'm off to bed, you see.

HOST.

Good night, Sophia dear!

SÖLLER.

Sleep well!
(*Looking after her.*) Right fair is she!
(*He runs after her and kisses her again at the door.*)
Sleep well, my lamb!
(*To the Host.*) And you will also go to bed?

HOST.

A devil's letter that! I'd like to hear it read!

(To SÖLLER.)

Now, Carnival! Good night!

SÖLLER.

Thanks! Calm be your repose!

HOST.

Good Söller, when you go, take care the door to close!

(Exit.)

SÖLLER.

You needn't be alarm'd!

SCENE VII.

SÖLLER (*alone*).

What song will now be sung?
 O that accursèd play! I wish the rogue were hung!
 His figures were not fair, and I must bear it too!
 He storms and fumes away; I know not what to do.
 Suppose . . . Alcestes gold has got . . . and my false
 keys——

I'm sure at my expense he fain himself would please!
 I long have hated him; around my wife he slinks;
 And now, just for this once, I'll be his guest, methinks!
 But then, if it were known, there'd be the deuce to pay——
 I'm now in such distress, I know no other way.
 The gamester claims his gold, or threatens vengeance
 deep,
 Then, Söller, courage take! The whole house is asleep.
 And if it be found out, they'll find me safely bedded;
 Thieves oft escape who are to handsome women wedded.

(Exit.)

ACT II.

Alcestes' Room.

*The stage is divided in its whole length into parlor and alcove.
 On one side of the parlor stands a table, on which are papers
 and a strong box. At the bottom is a large door, and at the
 side a small one, opposite the alcove.*

SCENE I.

SÖLLER (*in his domino, with a mask on his face, without shoes, a
 dark lantern in his hand, enters at the little door, and turns
 the light fearfully round the room; he then advances more
 boldly, takes off his mask, and speaks*).

One need not valiant be, in following one's calling;
 One through the world may go, by cunning and by
 crawling,
 While one to get a bag of gold, or p'rhaps his death,
 With pistols arm'd. will come and say with bated breath:

"Give up your purse, and lose no time about it, pray,"
As quietly as if he only said Good-day,
Another round you steals, and with his magic passes
And sleight-of-hand your watch soon in his power, alas, is,
And when you seek it, he says boldly to your face:
"I'll steal it. Take good care"; and that is soon the case.
But Nature gave me ne'er endowments such as that;
My heart too tender is, my fingers are too fat.
Yet, not to be a rogue, is difficult indeed,
Each day the cash grows less, each day the more we need.
You now have made the leap; take care that you don't fall!
Each person in the house believes I'm at the ball.
Alcestes at the fête is now; my wife's alone;
Has constellation e'er a better aspect shown?

(Approaching the table.)

O come, thou holy one! Thou god in this strong-box!
Without thee, e'en a king is scarcely orthodox.
Ye pick-locks, many thanks! your merit is untold!
Through you I capture him, the mighty pick-lock: Gold!
(Whilst he is trying to open the strong-box.)

An extra-clerk I once was in a court of justice;
I didn't stop there long,—so little people's trust is;
'Twas write, write, write, all day, with trouble still in-
creasing,

The prospects were not good, the drudgery unceasing;
'Twas insupportable. A thief was caught one day,
False keys were on him found, and he was hang'd straight-
way.

Tenacious of her rights is justice known to be;
A subaltern was I, the false keys fell to me.
I pick'd them up. A thing may seem for little fit,
But there may come a time when you'll be glad of it!
And now *(the lock springs open)*.

O lovely coin! I feel like one possess'd!
(He puts money in his pocket.)

My pocket swells with cash, with rapture swells my
breast,—

Unless 'tis fright. But hark, ye coward limbs! Pooh, pooh!
Why tremble thus?—Enough!

(He looks into the strong-box again, and takes more money.)

Once more! Yes, that will do!

(*He closes it and starts.*)

Again? There's something stirs! This house was never haunted——

The devil 'tis, perchance! His presence isn't wanted!

Is it a cat? But no! Tom-cats walk lighter, rather.

Be quick! They're at the lock——

(*He springs into the alcove.*)

SCENE II.

The HOST (entering at the side door, with a wax candle). SÖLLER.

SÖLLER.

The deuce! It's my wife's father!

HOST.

'Tis folly to possess a nervous disposition;
Half guilty only yet, my heart's in ebullition.
Inquisitive I ne'er in all my life have been,
But in that letter some great secret may be seen.
The papers are so dull, they long have nothing told,
The newest thing one hears is always one month old.
And then indeed it is a most excessive bore,
When each one says: "O, yes! I've read your tale
before."

Were I a cavalier, a minister I'd be;
Then all the couriers needs must bring their news to me.
This letter I can't find! Perchance he left it not;
If so, confound it all. There's nothing to be got!

SÖLLER (*aside*).

You good old fool! I see, the god of news and thieves
Less worship gets from you than he from me receives.

HOST.

I cannot find it—Hah!—Just hark! What noise is that
In the saloon?——

SÖLLER.

Perchance he smells me!

HOST.

By the pat,

It is a woman's foot.

SÖLLER.

That hardly meets my case!

HOST (*blows out his candle, and lets it fall, whilst in his confusion he cannot unlock the little door*).

This lock still bothers me.

(*Pushes open the door, and exit.*)

SCENE III.

SOPHIA, *entering at the bottom door with a light*. SÖLLER.SÖLLER (*aside, in the alcove*).

It is a woman's face!

Hell! Devil! 'Tis my wife! What can this indicate?

SOPHIA.

I quake at this bold step.

SÖLLER.

'Tis she, as sure as fate!

A pretty rendezvous! But now suppose again
I show'd myself! My neck would be in danger then!

SOPHIA.

Just follow in Love's wake! With friendly mien he first
Allures you on awhile——

SÖLLER.

I feel that I shall burst!

But I dare not——

SOPHIA.

. . . But if you ever lose your way,

No ignis-fatuus e'en such cruel tricks will play.

SÖLLER.

A bog to you would prove less than this room a curse!

SOPHIA.

Matters have long gone ill, but now grow daily worse.
My husband gets quite wild. He always caused me
trouble,
But now so bad is he, I hate him nearly double.

SÖLLER.

You wretch!

SOPHIA.

He has my hand. Alcestes, as erewhile,
My heart possesses still.

SÖLLER.

Enchantment, poison vile,
Were not so bad!

SOPHIA.

This heart, which for him fiercely burn'd,
And which from him alone the art of love first learn'd——

SÖLLER.

The deuce!

SOPHIA.

. . . Was calm and cold, ere soften'd by Alcestes.

SÖLLER.

Ye husbands, hear the tale that now by her confess'd is!

SOPHIA.

Alcestes loved me well!

SÖLLER.

That's over long ago!

SOPHIA.

And how I loved him too!

SÖLLER.

Mere child's play, as you know!

SOPHIA.

Fate parted us, and, ah! my sins to expiate,
I needs must wed a brute.—O what a dreadful fate!

SÖLLER.

A brute am I?—A brute? A brute with horns, too, now!

SOPHIA.

What see I?

SÖLLER.

Madam, what?

SOPHIA.

My father's candle! How
Could it come here?—Suppose . . . If so, I needs must fly;
Perchance he's watching us!—

SÖLLER.

Your scourge, O conscience, ply!

SOPHIA.

Yet I can't understand how he could lose it here.

SÖLLER.

Fears she her father not, the devil she won't fear!

SOPHIA.

Ah, no, all in the house in deepest slumber lie.

SÖLLER.

Ay, lust more potent is, than fear of penalty.

SOPHIA.

My father is in bed.—How ever could it be?
Well, be it so!

SÖLLER.

Alas!

SOPHIA.

Alcestes, where is he?

SÖLLER.

O could I but——

SOPHIA.

My heart forebodes some coming evil;
I love and fear him too.

SÖLLER.

I fear him like the devil,
And more too. If he came, I'd say: "Good king infernal,
If you will take them off, I'll owe you thanks eternal!"

SOPHIA.

Thou art too honest, heart! What crime committest thou?
Thou vowedst to be true? Why care for such a vow?
True to that man to be, who has no single merit,
Who is so very coarse, false, foolish?

SÖLLER.

Thanks, I hear it!

SOPHIA.

If one may not detest such monsters for their pains,
I much prefer the land where devil-worship reigns.
He is a devil!

SÖLLER.

What? A devil? Monster? Me!
I cannot bear it more!
(*He is about to spring out.*)

SCENE IV.

ALCESTES (*dressed, with hat and sword, covered with a cloak,
which he immediately takes off*). THE ABOVE.

ALCESTES.

You're waiting then, I see!

SOPHIA.

Sophia came here first.

ALCESTES.

You fear?

SOPHIA.

I'm fainting nearly.

ALCESTES.

No, dearest, no!

SÖLLER.

How fond! Preliminaries merely!

SOPHIA.

You feel how much this heart has suffer'd for your sake,
This heart you understand ; forgive the step I take!

ALCESTES.

Sophia!

SOPHIA.

Ne'er shall I, if you forgive it, rue.

SÖLLER.

You'd better ask of me, if I forgive it too!

SOPHIA.

What made me hither come? In truth, I scarce know why.

SÖLLER.

I know it but too well!

SOPHIA.

As one that dreams am I.

SÖLLER.

Would I were dreaming too!

SOPHIA.

A heart full of distress

I bring to you.

ALCESTES.

To tell one's trouble makes it less.

SOPHIA.

A sympathetic heart like yours I ne'er did see.

SÖLLER.

When you together yawn, you call that sympathy!
Delightful!

SOPHIA.

And when thus a perfect man I've found,
Why to your opposite am I for ever bound?
I have a heart which ne'er to virtue said adieu.

ALCESTES.

I know it.

SÖLLER.

Yes, and I!

SOPHIA.

Though loveable are you,
One single word from me you never should have guess'd,
Unless this hapless heart were hopelessly oppress'd.
I day by day behold our house to ruin go;
The life my husband leads! How can we go on so!
I know he loves me not; my tears he never sees,
And when my father storms, him too must I appease.
Each morning with it brings fresh ground for provocation.

SÖLLER (*touched after a fashion*).

Poor woman! I confess there's cause for her vexation!

SOPHIA.

My husband has no wish to lead a proper life;
In vain I talk; no man has such a yielding wife;
He revels all the day, makes debts on ev'ry side,
At once he plays, fights, sneaks, and quarrels far and wide.
His only wit consists in folly and wild pranks,
His only cleverness is that of mountebanks.
He lies, traduces, cheats.

SÖLLER.

She's gath'ring now, I see,
Materials to compose my fun'ral eulogy!

SOPHIA.

The torments I endure are quite enough to kill,
Did I not know——

SÖLLER.

Speak out!

SOPHIA.

Alcestes loves me still.

ALCESTES.

He loves, complains like you.

SOPHIA.

It mitigates my pain,
From one at least, from you, compassion to obtain.

Alcestes, by this hand, this dear hand, I entreat,
That you will ever keep your heart unchanged.

SÖLLER.

How sweet

Her words are!

SOPHIA.

For this heart which, save for you, ne'er glow'd,
No other comfort knows than that by you bestow'd.

ALCESTES.

I know of nought that's fit to match your noble heart.
(*He takes SOPHIA in his arms and kisses her.*)

SÖLLER.

Alas, will no kind fate appear, to take my part?
My heart is full of woe.

SOPHIA.

My friend!

SÖLLER.

'Tis quite enough;
I'm altogether sick of friendship and such stuff.
And since it seems that they have nothing more to say,
I wish they'd kiss no more, and forthwith go their way!

SOPHIA.

Unkind one, let me go!

SÖLLER.

The deuce! What affectation!
"Unkind one, let me go!" that means capitulation.
"You ought to be ashamed!" the stale cry is of many,
As down the hill they fall. I wouldn't give a penny
Now for her virtue!

SOPHIA (*extricating herself*).

Friend, one final parting kiss,
And then farewell!

ALCESTES.

You go?

SOPHIA.

I go, for needful 'tis.

ALCESTES.

You love me, and you go?

SOPHIA.

I go, because I love.

I soon should lose a friend, did I not quickly move.
The course of one's laments to run at night prefers,
In some sure spot, where nought to startle us occurs.
We more confiding grow, when calmly we complain;
But for our weaker sex, the risks increase amain.
In over-confidence too many dangers lie;
A sorrow-soften'd heart the mouth will not deny
At such a happy time to friends for friendship's kisses.
A friend is still a man——

SÖLLER.

She knows full well what this is!

SOPHIA.

Farewell, and be assured that I am still your lover.

SÖLLER.

Quite close above my head the storm is passing over.

(Exit SOPHIA. ALCESTES accompanies her through the middle door, which remains open. They are seen to stand together in the distance.)

For this once be content! I've small time for reflection,
The moment 'tis to fly; I'm off in this direction.

(He quits the alcove, and hastens through the side door.)

SCENE V.

ALCESTES *(returning)*.

What wouldest thou, my heart? Indeed, 'tis passing
strange,
How that dear creature has for thee endured no change!

Thy early gratitude for those past hours so bright
Of love's first happiness, has not departed quite.
What have I purposed not! What feelings have been mine!
Still uneffaced remains that image all divine,
Where love, in glorious wise, its presence first avow'd,
The image at whose shrine my heart with rev'rence bow'd;
How all is alter'd now! What change comes o'er our lives!
Yet of that sacred glow, a something still survives.
If truly thou'lt confess what made thee hither come,
The page will be turn'd o'er, thy love afresh will bloom,
And thy free-thinking ways, thy distant schemes, the
shame

By thee for her devised, the plan which thou didst frame,—
How vile they now appear! Thou art distress'd at last?
Before thou snarest her, she long had held thee fast!
This is the lot of man! We hurry on apace,
And he who thinks the most, is in the saddest case.
But now to urgent things: a plan must I invent
Whereby to-morrow she may have some money lent.
It is a curs'd mischance; her fate my pity wakes.
Her husband, that vile wretch, her life a burden makes.
I've got here just enough. Let's think!—yes, it will do.
Were I a stranger e'en, her hard lot I must rue.
But, ah! this mournful thought my heart and mind
oppresses—

My conduct far too much the cause of her distress is.
I could not hinder it; to happen thus 'twas fated!
What cannot now be changed, may be alleviated.

(He opens the strong-box.)

The devil! What is this? My strong box empty nearly?
Of all the silver there, three-fourths have vanish'd clearly.
I have the gold with me. The keys are in my pocket!—
All since the afternoon! My room—who could unlock it?
Sophia? Pshaw! But yes, Sophia? Base suspicion!
My servant? No! that's too a foolish supposition.
He's fast asleep. Good man, his innocence I know!
Who then? By Heav'n, the thought impatient makes
me grow.

ACT III.

SCENE I. *The Inn Parlor.*

HOST.

(In a dressing-gown, sitting near the table, on which are a half-burnt candle, coffee-things, pipes, and newspapers. After the first few verses he rises, and dresses himself during this scene and the beginning of the next.)

That letter, hang the thing! of sleep and rest robs me.
This comes from doing what I oughtn't, well I see.
It seems impossible to make this matter out :
When one is doing wrong, the devil's there, no doubt.
'Twas my vocation ne'er, and therefore I'm afraid ;
And yet of any host it never should be said
He fears, when in the house strange noises he perceives,
For ghosts, as is well-known, are close allied with thieves.
No man was in the house, not Söller nor Alcestes ;
The waiter it was not ; each maiden gone to rest is.
But stop! At early dawn, perchance 'tween three and
four,
I heard a gentle noise ; it was Sophia's door.
She, maybe, was the ghost at whose approach I fled ;
It was a woman's foot, just like Sophia's tread.
But then, what did she there? One knows that women-
kind
To pulling things about and meddling are inclined ;
Guests' clothes and linen they inspect. I wish I first
Had finely frighten'd her, then into laughter burst!
She would have search'd with me—the letter had been
found ;
My efforts, now in vain, had with success been crown'd.
Curse it! One ne'er can think when one is in a strait,
And any plan that's good is thought of just too late!

SCENE II.

The Host, SOPHIA.

SOPHIA.

My father, only think !——

HOST.

You do not say good-morrow?

SOPHIA.

O, pardon me, papa; my head is full of sorrow.

HOST.

And why?

SOPHIA.

Alcestes' cash, which he received so lately,
Has altogether gone.

HOST.

That comes from gambling greatly.
They can't restrain themselves!

SOPHIA.

Not so; 'tis stolen.

HOST.

What?

SOPHIA.

Yes, stolen from his room!

HOST.

I wish the thief were shot!

Who is it? Quick!

SOPHIA.

Who knows?

HOST.

What! In this house, you say?

SOPHIA.

Out of the box which on his table stands all day.

HOST.

And when?

SOPHIA.

This night!

HOST (*aside*).

Since I so curious was, the scandal
Will surely fall on me, for they will find my candle!

SOPHIA (*aside*).

He mutters, looks confused. Can he the culprit be?
That he was in the room, his candle proves to me.

HOST (*aside*).

Can she have taken it? The notion makes me swear;
Cass yesterday ran short, and she to-night was there.

(*Aloud.*)

This is a dreadful mess! Who injures us, take heed!
Respectable and cheap our watchwords are indeed.

SOPHIA.

Though he may bear the loss, 'tis we who'll suffer most;
The public will be sure to lay it to the host.

HOST.

I know that but too well. A dreadful mess, no doubt.
If 'tis a house-thief, who can find the rascal out?
Much trouble it will give.

SOPHIA.

What shall we do? Good luck!

HOST (*aside*).

Aha, she's much disturb'd!

(*Aloud, in a more peevish tone.*)

I wish he had it back!

Right glad were I.

SOPHIA (*aside*).

He now repents, 'tis my belief!

(*Aloud.*)

And if it were restored, whoever was the thief,
He need not know, and soon 'twill from his memory pass.

HOST (*aside*).

If she is not the thief, then write me down an ass!

(*Aloud.*)

A good child you have been; my confidence in you—
Just wait! (*He goes to the door to see.*)

SOPHIA (*aside*).

By Heaven! he means to make confession true!

HOST.

My child, I know you well. A lie you never told——

SOPHIA.

Sooner from all the world than you I'd aught withhold;
And so I hope that now you'll also be assured——

HOST.

You are my child; what can't be cured must be endured.

SOPHIA.

The best of hearts sometimes is subject to temptation.

HOST.

O let the past no more occasion us vexation!
That you were in the room, no mortal knows but I.

SOPHIA (*startled*).

You know?——

HOST.

Yes, I was there; I heard you passing by.
I knew not who it was, and started off full speed.

SOPHIA (*aside*).

Yes; he the money has. There's now no doubt indeed!

HOST.

This morning heard I you, I lately recollected.

SOPHIA.

And, what is best of all, you will not be suspected.
I found the candle——

HOST.

You ?

SOPHIA.

Yes, I !

HOST.

'Tis passing strange !
To give it back again, how can we best arrange ?

SOPHIA.

You'll say : " Alcestes, sir, do spare my house, I pray !
" Behold your money, I have found the thief to-day.
" You know yourself how great we find temptation's force ;
" He scarcely had the cash, when vast was his remorse.
" He came and gave it me. Here 'tis ! Let him be pardon'd
" For his offence ! "—I'm sure Alcestes' heart's not harden'd.

HOST.

You certainly can use persuasion soft as honey !

SOPHIA.

Yes, that's the proper way !

HOST.

I first must have the money.

SOPHIA.

You have it not ?

HOST.

How I should have it, I can't see.

SOPHIA.

How have it ?

HOST.

Yes ! Well, how ? Unless you give it me.

SOPHIA.

Who has it ?

HOST.

Who?

SOPHIA.

Of course, if 'tis not you?

HOST.

Absurd:

SOPHIA.

Where have you put it?

HOST.

I can't understand a word.

You haven't got it?

SOPHIA.

I?

HOST.

Yes!

SOPHIA.

How could that be so?

HOST (*making signs as if he were stealing*).

Eh!

SOPHIA.

I can't understand!

HOST.

Quite shameless, child, you grow!

You slip away, when comes the time for restitution.

You have confess'd. For shame on such irresolution!

SOPHIA.

This is too much! You now make this vile accusation;
Just now you said that you gave way to the temptation.

HOST.

You toad! I said so? When? Is this the way you
love me,

And show me due respect? A thief you try to prove me,
When you're the thief yourself!

SOPHIA.

My father!

HOST.

Yet you were

This morning in the room?

SOPHIA.

Yes!

HOST.

Yet you still can dare

To say you've not the cash?

SOPHIA.

That does not follow.

HOST.

Yes!

SOPHIA.

You, too, were there to-day——

HOST.

I'll pull your hair, unless

You hold your tongue and go!

(Exit SOPHIA, crying.)

You take the joke too far,

Unworthy one!—She's gone! Too impudent you are.
Perchance she thinks that lies will make him overlook it;
Enough, the money's gone, and she's the one who took it.

SCENE III.

ALCESTES *(in deep thought, in a frock-coat).* The Host.HOST *(in an embarrassed and entreating tone).*

Right sorrowful am I at what I've lately heard!
Well understand I, sir, how you by wrath are stirr'd;
And yet I beg that you will nothing say about it,
And I will do what's right. I pray you do not doubt it.
If in the town 'tis known, 'twill fill my foes with glee,
And their maliciousness will throw the guilt on me!
It was no stranger, sir! The culprit is indoors!
Be calm, and soon again the money shall be yours!
Pray, what was the amount?

ALCESTES.

A hundred dollars!

HOST.

What!

ALCESTES.

A hundred dollars, though——

HOST.

Contemptible are not!

ALCESTES.

Yet I am quite disposed my pardon to bestow,
Could I the culprit's name, and how he did it, know.

HOST.

Had I the money back, I ne'er would ask, I vow,
If Michael or if Jack had taken it, or how.

ALCESTES (*aside*).

My old attendant? No, he cannot be the thief,
And from my chamber too—It passes all belief.

HOST.

Why rack your brains like this? The trouble is in vain;
Enough, I'll find the cash!

ALCESTES.

My cash?

HOST.

That none may know of it! We long have known each
other;
Enough, I'll find your cash. So give yourself no bother!

ALCESTES.

You know then?——

HOST.

H'm! The cash you soon shall have, however.

ALCESTES.

But only tell me this——

HOST.

Not for the world, no, never!

ALCESTES.

Just tell me who it was.

HOST.

I say, I dare not say.

ALCESTES.

'Twas some one in the house?

HOST.

Don't ask me that, I pray!

ALCESTES.

Was it the servant girl?

HOST.

Good Hannah? No, not she!

ALCESTES.

The waiter 'twas, perchance?

HOST.

No, neither was it he!

ALCESTES.

The cook's a skilful hand——

HOST.

At dishing up a dinner.

ALCESTES.

The scullion Jack?

HOST.

He ne'er would be so great a sinner.

ALCESTES.

The gard'ner it might be?

HOST.

No, wrong again, I guess!

ALCESTES.

The gard'ner's son?

HOST.

No, no!

ALCESTES.

Perchance——

HOST.

The house-dog?—Yes!

ALCESTES (*aside*).

Just wait a bit, old fool! I'll catch you by and bye.

(*Aloud.*)Whoever was the thief, it doesn't signify,
If I my money get. (*He pretends to be leaving.*)

HOST.

True!

ALCESTES (*as if a sudden thought struck him*).Host, I see by chance, sir,
My inkstand's empty. I this letter straight must answer.

HOST.

What! Yesterday it came; to answer it to-day,
Shows that it weighty is.

ALCESTES.

I ought not to delay.

HOST.

It is a charming thing to have to correspond.

ALCESTES.

It is not always so. The time one loses on't
Is worth more than the game.

HOST.

'Tis like a game of cards;
A single trump turns up, and past ill-luck rewards.
The letter yesterday important news, however,
Contains. Might I enquire?——

ALCESTES.

Not for the world, no, never!

HOST.

Nought from America?

ALCESTES.

I say, I dare not say.

HOST.

Is Frederick ill again?

ALCESTES.

Don't ask me that, I pray!

HOST.

Are matters changed in Hesse? are people going?

ALCESTES.

No!

HOST.

Perchance the Emperor?—

ALCESTES.

Yes, that may well be so!

HOST.

Things in the North go wrong?

ALCESTES.

I cannot swear to that.

HOST.

They secretly conspire?

ALCESTES.

O, people love to chat!

HOST.

There's no disaster, though?

ALCESTES.

Bravo! You soon will guess!

HOST.

Perchance in the late frost—

ALCESTES.

The hares were frozen?—Yes!

HOST.

You don't appear to place much confidence in me.

ALCESTES.

When folks mistrustful are, we trust them not, you see.

HOST.

What mark of confidence will suit your purpose better?

ALCESTES.

Well, tell me who's the thief; you then shall read my letter.

Right good the bargain is, which I to you now offer.

Will you the letter have?

HOST (*confused and eagerly*).

I must accept your proffer!

(*Aside.*)

Would it were something else, which he from me would learn!

ALCESTES.

You see that one good turn deserves another turn.
That I'll the secret keep, I by my honor swear.HOST (*aside*).Would that this letter now less appetizing were!
But if Sophia—she should see my tribulation!
No mortal could resist such wonderful temptation!
To master its contents, I all impatience am.ALCESTES (*aside*).

No greyhound ever rush'd so wildly at a ham.

HOST (*ashamed, giving way, and still hesitating*).

Well, as you wish it, sir, your great civility——

ALCESTES (*aside*).

He's biting now.

HOST.

Demands like confidence from me.

(doubtfully and half entreatingly.)

You'll let me see at once the letter, sir, because . . . ?

ALCESTES *(holding out the letter)*.

This moment !

HOST *(slowly approaching ALCESTES with his eyes fixed on the letter)*.

Well, the thief——

ALCESTES.

The thief !

HOST.

Who stole it, was——

ALCESTES.

Well, out with it !

HOST.

Was my——

ALCESTES.

Well !

HOST *(in a resolute tone, whilst he comes up to ALCESTES, and tears the letter from his hand)*.

Was my daughter !

ALCESTES *(astonished)*.

What !

HOST *(comes forward, tears the cover to pieces in his eagerness to open the letter, and begins to read)*.

"Right honorable sir !"

ALCESTES *(taking him by the shoulder)*.

'Twas she ? You're telling not

The truth !

HOST *(impatiently)*.

Yes, it was she ! And much distress'd am I.
(He reads.)

"And also"——

ALCESTES (*as above*).

No, good host! Sophia! 'Tis a lie!

HOST (*tears himself loose, and continues without answering him*).

"My much respected"——

ALCESTES (*as above*).

What! The guilty one was she?

I'm quite confounded.

HOST.

"Sir"——

ALCESTES (*as above*).

Now pray just answer me!

How came it all about?

HOST.

You by and bye shall hear.

ALCESTES.

Is it quite sure?

HOST.

Quite sure!

ALCESTES (*to himself, as he goes out*).

Methinks my course is clear!

SCENE IV.

HOST (*reads and speaks between whiles*).

"And patron"—Has he gone?—"The very friendly way

"In which you view my faults, induces me to-day

"Once more to trouble you"—what faults would he confess?

"I feel assured, kind sir, you'll share my happiness."

That's good!—"To-day kind Heaven another joy has brought,

"And you're the first of whom my thankful heart has thought.

"My dear wife is confined of her sixth son"—With rage
I'm fit to die!—"The boy appear'd upon the stage
"Quite early."—Hang or drown the brat! the vile inven-
tion!

"And I make bold to ask if, in your condescension——"
I feel about to choke! To suffer such a blow,
Just when I'm getting old! I will not bear it, no!
Just wait a bit! Your due reward shall you receive;
Alcestes, you shall see! My house you straight shall
leave.

So good a friend as me thus shamefully to treat!
I'd fain inflict on him a retribution meet!
But then my daughter! O! in such a scrape to get
her!

And I've betrayed her for a mere godfather's letter!
(*He seizes hold of his wig.*)

O donkey that I am! I'm in my dotage now!
O letter, cash, and trick! I'll kill myself, I vow!
With what shall I begin? How punish such vile tricks?
(*He grasps a stick, and runs round the stage.*)

If any one comes near, I'll thrash him into snicks!
If I but had them here, who plann'd the thing so wisely,
By all the powers that be, I'd currycomb them nicely!
I'll die unless I can—I'd give a sight of cash
To see the servant now a glass or bottle smash!
I shall devour myself.—Revenge, revenge for me!
(*He attacks his arm-chair and thrashes it.*)
Ha! Thou art dusty? Come! I'll take it out of thee!

SCENE V.

*The Host continuing to strike. SÖLLER enters and is frightened;
he is in his domino, with his mask bound to his arm, and is
half intoxicated.*

SÖLLER.

What's this? Why, is he mad? Methinks I'd best be
mute!

I shouldn't care to be that arm-chair's substitute!
Some evil spirit has the old man seized to-day;
'Twere better I were off. It isn't safe to stay.

HOST (*without seeing SÖLLER*).

I can no more! Alas! how ache both back and arm!
(*He throws himself into the arm-chair.*)
My body's in a sweat.

SÖLLER (*aside*).

Yes, motion makes us warm.

(*He shows himself to the HOST.*)

Good father!

HOST.

O the brute! The night in revels spends he;
I vex myself to death, and de'il a bit attends he.
The Shrovetide fool his cash at play and dancing loses,
And laughs, while holding here his carnival the deuce is!

SÖLLER.

In such a rage!

HOST.

Just wait! No longer will I call so.

SÖLLER.

What now?

HOST.

Alcestes! Child! Shall I inform him also?

SÖLLER.

No! no!

HOST.

If you were hang'd, 'twould be for me much better,
And that Alcestes, too, with his confounded letter.
(*Exit.*)

SCENE VI.

SÖLLER (*the very picture of terror*).

What's this? Alas! Perchance, ere many minutes flee—
Take good care of your skull! Your back will cud-
gell'd be!

P'rhaps all has been found out! I'm in a burning fever,
So dreadful is my fright. Why, Doctor Faustus never
Was in so bad a case, or Richard Crook-back e'en!
Hell here, the gallows there, the cuckold in between!
(He runs about like a madman, and finally recovers himself.)
One's never happy made by stolen goods, you know!
Go, coward, scoundrel, go! Why are you frighten'd so?
Perchance 'tis not so bad. I'll soon know how I'll fare.

(He sees ALCESTES and runs away.)

Alas! 'tis he! 'tis he! He'll seize me by the hair!

SCENE VII.

ALCESTES *(fully dressed, with hat and sword)*.

How fearful is the blow by which my heart oppress'd is!
That wondrous creature whom the fancy of Alcestes
So tenderly the shrine of ev'ry virtue thought,
Who him the highest grade of fairest love first taught,
In whom god, maiden, friend, in one were all so blended,
And now so much abased! That vision now is ended.
'Tis well p'rhaps to descend a height so superhuman;
Like other women now, she's nothing but a woman;
But then, so deep! so deep! That drives me into madness.
My contumacious heart yearns after her with sadness.
How mean! Canst thou not turn to good account the
change?

Seize on the proffer'd bliss that comes in form so strange!
A matchless woman, whom you love so very dearly,
Needs cash. Alcestes, quick! The pence you give her,
clearly
Would turn to pounds. But now, the cash herself she
takes,—

'Tis well! If she once more parade of virtue makes!
Go! pluck your courage up, and speak thus in cold
blood:

"You, madam, have perchance the money taken? Good!
"I'm heartily rejoiced. Let no reserve be shown
"In such a small affair, but treat mine as your own"—
A confidential tone, as though 'tween man and wife—
And virtue's self, if you enact it to the life,

Won't be alarm'd, but e'en to yield will soon incline.
She comes! You are confused? 'Tis an unhappy sign!
You guilty deem yourself; you cheat me in addition;
Your heart is ill-disposed, but weak's your disposition.*

SCENE VIII.

ALCESTES, SOPHIA.

SOPHIA.

Alcestes, what means this? My sight you seem to shun—
Has solitude for you such vast attractions won?

ALCESTES.

I know not what it is impels me at this season;
We oft soliloquize without a special reason.

SOPHIA.

Your loss indeed is great, and well may cause vexation.

ALCESTES.

It nothing signifies; I feel no irritation.
To lose a little cash small self-restraint demands;
Who knows but that it may have fallen in good hands?

SOPHIA.

No loss will your kind heart allow on us to fall.

ALCESTES.

A little openness this pain had saved us all.

SOPHIA.

How must I take this?

* In the later editions, the following five lines take the place of the nine concluding lines of this scene:—

“You find yourself in need of ready money? Good!

“No secret of it make! Let no reserve be shown

“In taking what is mine, but treat it as your own.”—

She comes! All my false calm at once has flown away!

You think she took the cash, and yet would say her nay!

E. A. B.

G

ALCESTES (*smiling*).

What?

SOPHIA.

What can your meaning be?

ALCESTES.

Sophia, me you know! Have confidence in me!
The money's gone, and where 'tis lying, let it lie!
I should have held my tongue, if sooner known had I
That thus the matter stands——

SOPHIA (*astonished*).

You know, then, all about it?

ALCESTES (*with tenderness ; he seizes her hand and kisses it*).
Your father! Yes, I know; my dearest, do not doubt it!

SOPHIA (*surprised and ashamed*).

And you forgive?

ALCESTES.

A joke, who'd deem it as a crime?

SOPHIA.

Methinks——

ALCESTES.

Pray suffer me to speak my mind this time.
Alcestes' heart tow'rds you with love's still running over.
Fate sever'd you from me, and yet I am your lover;
Your heart is ever mine, as mine unchanged you find.
My money's yours as much as though by law assign'd:
You have an equal right to all that I possess;
Take what you will, if with your love you me will bless.
(*He embraces her, and she is silent.*)
Command whate'er you want! I'm quite prepared to
grant it.

SOPHIA (*haughtily, whilst she tears herself away from him*).

I prize your money, sir! Indeed I do not want it.
I scarcely understand a tone so strange and fervent.
Ha! You mistake me——

ALCESTES (*piqued*).

O, your most obedient servant
Knows you indeed too well, and what he wants, he knows,
And sees not why your wrath thus suddenly o'erflows.
When one so far goes wrong——

SOPHIA (*astonished*).

Goes wrong? Pray, in what sense?

ALCESTES.

Madam!

SOPHIA (*angrily*).

What mean you, sir?

ALCESTES.

Forgive my diffidence:
I love you far too much to think of telling it.

SOPHIA (*with indignation*).

Alcestes!

ALCESTES.

Well, then, ask papa, if you think fit!
He knows, so seems it——

SOPHIA (*with an outbreak of vehemence*).

What? Give me an answer true!
I am not joking, sir!

ALCESTES.

He says that it was you——

SOPHIA (*as above*).

Well, what?

ALCESTES.

That it was you,—by whom the cash was taken.

SOPHIA (*with anger and tears, while she turns away*).

He dares? O God! By shame so utterly forsaken!

ALCESTES (*entreatingly*).

Sophia!

SOPHIA (*turned away from him*).

You're not worth——

ALCESTES (*as above*).

Sophia!

SOPHIA.

Leave the place!

ALCESTES.

Pray pardon me!

SOPHIA.

Away! Forgive such conduct base?

My father scruples not to rob me of my honor!

O poor Sophia! Thus Alcestes looks upon her?

Sooner than tell the truth, my life I'd forfeit rather—

But now it must come out!—The robber was—my father!
(*Exit hastily.*)

SCENE IX.

ALCESTES. *Afterwards* SÖLLER.

ALCESTES.

Would I could make it out! Here is a pretty mess!
Only the devil now this riddle strange can guess!
Two persons, who the best of characters have had,
Accuse each other!—'Tis enough to drive one mad.
No story such as this has ever reach'd my ears,
And yet I've known them both for many, many years.
This is a case where thought no proper clue reveals;
The more one meditates, the greater fool one feels.
Sophia! the old man! Could either of them thief?
Had Söller been accused, that well could I believe!
On him could but one spark of mere suspicion fall!
But he the livelong night, I know, was at the ball.

SÖLLER (*in his usual dress and rather intoxicated*).

There sits the devil's imp, after his night-long revel!
Could I but seize your neck, I'd scrag you, Master Devil!

ALCESTES (*aside*).

He comes, as if bespoke!

(*Aloud.*) Well, Söller, what's the news?

SÖLLER.

The noise the music made has given me the blues.

(*He rubs his forehead.*)

My headache's dreadful.

ALCESTES.

You were at the ball; were many

Ladies there too?

SÖLLER.

About as usual! When there's any
Bacon, the mice will seek the trap.

ALCESTES.

Was't merry?

SÖLLER.

Quite!

ALCESTES.

You danced?

SÖLLER.

I but look'd on.

(*Aside.*) At your fine dance last night!

ALCESTES.

What! Söller did not dance? Why, how came that about?

SÖLLER.

I went there with the full intention, there's no doubt.

ALCESTES:

And yet you didn't?

SÖLLER.

No! My headache was so bad,

And so, for dancing not, a good excuse I had.

ALCESTES.

Indeed!

SÖLLER.

And what was worse, I found out to my cost,
The more I heard and saw, I sight and hearing lost.

ALCESTES.

So bad? I'm sorry for't! 'Twas quite a sudden fit?

SÖLLER.

O no, since you first came I've twinges had of it,
And longer.

ALCESTES.

That is strange!

SÖLLER.

No remedy I know.

ALCESTES.

Your head with warm cloths rub; 'twill put you in a glow,
And p'rhaps you'll then be cured.

SÖLLER (*aside*).

You're chaffing me, my friend?

(*Aloud.*) 'Tis not such easy work.

ALCESTES.

'Twill answer in the end.

And yet you're rightly served. I'll one suggestion make;
You ne'er by any chance your poor wife with you take,
When to a ball you go. Small wisdom, sir, is shown,
In leaving a young wife in her cold bed alone.

SÖLLER.

She likes to stop at home, and let me masquerade;
Well knows she how to warm herself, without my aid.

ALCESTES.

That's funny!

SÖLLER.

Yes! When one is fond of dainty food,
One doesn't need a hint to scent out what is good.

ALCESTES (*piqued*).

Why all this hyperbole?

SÖLLER.

My meaning's plain, I think.

Exempli gratiâ : I vastly like to drink

Father's old wine; but he my taste for it deplores,—
He spares his own; and so I drink it out of doors.

ALCESTES (*with resentment*).

You'd best be careful, sir!—

SÖLLER.

Most noble squire of ladies,
She's now my wife; to that, by you no deference paid is.
Her husband maybe deems she's something in addition.

ALCESTES (*with suppressed anger*).

Fine husband! I defy the slightest admonition;
And if you should presume a single word to say—

SÖLLER (*frightened. Aside*).

How fine! The end will be, that I must ask him: Pray
How virtuous is she?

(*Aloud.*) My hearth is still my hearth,
Despite strange cooks!

ALCESTES.

Beside your wife, how small your worth!
So virtuous and fair! A soul of purity!
What matchless dower she brought! A very angel she!

SÖLLER.

Her blood, too, as I've found, has much expansive power;
Head-ornaments for me were also in her dower.
For such a wife was I predestinated found,
And e'en before my birth was as a cuckold crown'd.

ALCESTES (*breaking out*).

Now, Söller!

SÖLLER (*impertinently*).

Well, what now?

ALCESTES (*restraining himself*).

I tell you, hold your peace!

SÖLLER.

I'd like to see the man who'd make my talking cease!

ALCESTES.

If place allow'd, you'd get a proper castigation!

SÖLLER (*half aloud*).

He'd fight a duel for my wife's good reputation!

ALCESTES.

Indeed!

SÖLLER (*as before*).

No mortal knows so well, how lies the land.

ALCESTES.

The deuce!

SÖLLER.

Alcestes, we perceive how matters stand.
Now wait! just wait a bit! The subject we'll pursue;
And we shall understand how gentlemen like you
The corn-fields for themselves will reap, yes, ev'ry one,
And for the husbands leave the gleanings, when they've
done.

ALCESTES.

I wonder much that you should be so bold, sir, know-
ing——

SÖLLER.

Full often-times my eyes with tears are overflowing;
Each day I feel as though I'm sniffing onions.

ALCESTES (*angrily and resolutely*).

How?

You go too far! Speak out! Explain your meaning now!
Your tongue to loosen I shall be compell'd, I ween.

SÖLLER (*boldly*).

I have a right, methinks, to know what I have seen.

ALCESTES.

Seen? What does seeing mean?

SÖLLER.

It means, what we discover,
When we both see and hear.

ALCESTES.

Ha!

SÖLLER.

Why with wrath boil over?

ALCESTES (*with the most determined anger*).

What have you heard? What seen? Reply without delay!

SÖLLER (*frightened, trying to go away*).

Allow me, my good sir!

ALCESTES (*holding him back*).

Where go you?

SÖLLER.

Right away!

ALCESTES.

You shall not leave this spot!

SÖLLER (*aside*).

I would the man were dead!

ALCESTES.

What have you heard?

SÖLLER.

I? Nought! 'Twas only what they said!

ALCESTES (*with angry impetuosity*).

Who was the man?

SÖLLER.

The man? A man——

ALCESTES (*more violently, and attacking him*).

Be quick! Begin!

SÖLLER (*in anguish*).

Who saw it with his eyes.

(*More boldly*.) I'll call the servants in!

ALCESTES (*seizing him by the neck*).

Who was it?

SÖLLER (*trying to tear himself loose*).

What? The deuce!

ALCESTES (*holding him more firmly*).

No more my temper try!

(*Drawing his sword.*)

Who is the wicked wretch? the rogue? the liar?

SÖLLER (*falling on his knees in his terror*).

I!

ALCESTES (*threateningly*).

What did you see?

SÖLLER (*timidly*).

I saw what proves that we're but human:
You, sir, are but a man; Sophia is a woman.

ALCESTES (*as above*).

And then?

SÖLLER.

Precisely what we see in each direction,
When men and women have reciprocal affection.

ALCESTES.

And that's?—

SÖLLER.

I should have thought you'd know by intuition.

ALCESTES.

Well?

SÖLLER.

Surely you'll not dare to scout the supposition.

ALCESTES.

Indeed! More plainly speak!

SÖLLER.

Release me! O, pray do!

ALCESTES (*still as above*).

It's call'd? The devil!

SÖLLER.

Well, it's call'd a Rendezvous.

ALCESTES (*startled*).

You lie!

SÖLLER (*aside*).

He's frighten'd now.

ALCESTES (*aside*).How could he know it e'er?
(*He sheathes his sword.*)SÖLLER (*aside*).

Take courage!

ALCESTES (*aside*).Who betray'd that we together were?
(*Recovering himself.*)

What mean you by your words?

SÖLLER (*insolently*).We'll now make all things pleasant.
The comedy last night! I happen'd to be present.ALCESTES (*astonished*).

Where?

SÖLLER.

In the closet.

ALCESTES.

O! you thus were at your ball!

SÖLLER.

And you were at your feast! Without one drop of gall,
Two words: though secret plans you gentry may pursue,
Be sure that by and bye they'll be exposed to view.

ALCESTES.

It's clear that you're the thief. I'd sooner have a raven
Or jackdaw in my house, than such a wicked craven
As you! For shame, bad man!

SÖLLER.

I'm bad, I must confess;
But then you gentlemen are always right, I guess!
Our property you think to handle at your pleasure;
No laws you keep, but deal to us another measure.
The principle's the same; some woman love, some gold.
If you would hang us, let your passions be controll'd!

ALCESTES.

You're very impudent——

SÖLLER.

I'm impudent, no doubt;
In truth, it is no joke with horns to go about.
In short, we mustn't make the thing a cause of strife:
'Twas I who took your cash, and you who took my wife.

ALCESTES (*threateningly*).

What took I?

SÖLLER.

Nothing, sir! It long had been your own,
Before 'twas mine.

ALCESTES.

If——

SÖLLER.

I must leave the thing alone.

ALCESTES.

The gallows for the thief!

SÖLLER.

Is it unknown to you
That stringent laws provide for other people too?

ALCESTES.

Söller!

SÖLLER (*makes a sign of beheading*).

Yes, there's the axe, if you indulge your passions——

ALCESTES.

Are you an expert, then, and understand the fashions?
You'll certainly be hang'd, or flogg'd in any case.

SÖLLER (*pointing to his forehead*).

I'm branded as it is.

SCENE X.

THE ABOVE. *The Host.* SOPHIA.SOPHIA (*at the bottom of the stage*).

His accusation base

My father still maintains.

HOST (*at the bottom of the stage*).

My daughter still won't yield.

SOPHIA.

There is Alcestes!

HOST (*seeing ALCESTES*).

Ha!

SOPHIA.

The truth will be reveal'd.

HOST (*to ALCESTES*).

She is the thief, good sir!

SOPHIA (*on the other side*).

The thief, sir, there you see!

ALCESTES (*looks at them both laughingly, and then says in the
same tone as they, pointing to SÖLLER*).

He is the thief!

SÖLLER (*aside*).

Alas for my poor skin!

SOPHIA.

He?

HOST.

He?

ALCESTES.

You are both innocent; 'tis he!

HOST.

I'd run a nail

With pleasure through his head!

SOPHIA.

You?

SÖLLER (*aside*).

Thunderbolts and hail!

HOST.

I'd like——

ALCESTES.

Be patient, sir; your wrath is ill-directed;
Although she guiltless was, Sophia was suspected.
She came to visit me. The step was bold, 'tis true;
Yet for her virtue I——

(*to SÖLLER.*)

But you were present too!

(*SOPHIA is astonished.*)

To us was this unknown; propitious was the night,
Her virtue——

SÖLLER.

There it was I had a pretty fright.

ALCESTES (*to the Host*).

But you?

HOST.

Sir, I was there from curiosity;
That cursèd letter I so anxious was to see.

I wonder, sir, that you such conduct manifested !
That fine godfather's trick I have not yet digested.

ALCESTES.

Excuse the jest ! And you, Sophia, faithful wife,
Will surely pardon me ?

SOPHIA.

Alcestes !

ALCESTES.

Ne'er in life
Your virtue will I doubt. Forgive that rendezvous !
As virtuous as good——

SÖLLER.

I half believe it too !

ALCESTES (*to SOPHIA*).

And also you'll forgive our Söller ?

SOPHIA.

Willingly !

(*She gives him her hand.*)

There !

ALCESTES (*to the HOST*).

Allons !

(*HOST gives SÖLLER his hand.*)

Steal no more !

SÖLLER.

What's distant, time brings nigh !

ALCESTES.

But where's my money now ?

SÖLLER.

I took it in my trouble ;
That gamester plagued me till he nearly bent me double.
I knew not what to do, I stole, and paid the debt ;
And now I'll give you back the dollars left me yet.

ALCESTES.

I'll give you what is spent.

SÖLLER.

Now all has come out right!

ALCESTES.

I only hope you'll grow quite honest, staid, polite!
And if you ever dare again with me to palter!—

SÖLLER.

So be it!--For this once, we've all escaped the halter.

GOETZ VON BERLICHINGEN

WITH THE IRON HAND.

A DRAMA.

TRANSLATED BY SIR WALTER SCOTT.

This drama was written in 1771: but it was not published until 1773, during which interval it underwent considerable alterations. It was the first work which Goethe submitted to the public, and it at once excited great attention, both on account of the originality of the subject and of the vigorous and unconventional manner in which it was worked out.

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

GOETZ VON BERLICHINGEN, the hero of the following drama, flourished in the 15th century, during the reign of Maximilian the First, Emperor of Germany. Previous to this period, every German noble holding a fief immediately from the Emperor, exercised on his estate a species of sovereignty subordinate to the imperial authority alone. Thus, from the princes and prelates possessed of extensive territories, down to the free knights and barons, whose domains consisted of a castle and a few acres of mountain and forest ground, each was a petty monarch upon his own property, independent of all control but the remote supremacy of the Emperor.

Among the extensive rights conferred by such a constitution, that of waging war against each other by their own private authority, was most precious to a race of proud and military barons. These private wars were called *feuds*, and the privilege of carrying them on was named *Faustrecht* (club-law). As the empire advanced in civilisation, the evils attending feuds became dreadfully conspicuous: each petty knight was by law entitled to make war upon his neighbours without any further ceremony than three days' previous defiance by a written form called *Fehdebrief*. Even the Golden Bull, which remedied so many evils in the Germanic body, left this dangerous privilege in full vigour. In time the residence of every free baron became a fortress, from which, as his passions or avarice dictated, sallied a band of marauders to back his quarrel, or to col-

lect an extorted revenue from the merchants who presumed to pass through his domain. At length whole bands of these freebooting nobles used to league together for the purpose of mutual defence against their more powerful neighbours, as likewise for that of predatory excursions against the princes, free towns, and ecclesiastic states of the empire, whose wealth tempted the needy barons to exercise against them their privilege of waging private war. These confederacies were distinguished by various titles expressive of their object: we find among them the Brotherhood of the Mace, the Knights of the Bloody Sleeve, &c., &c. If one of the brotherhood was attacked, the rest marched without delay to his assistance; and thus, though individually weak, the petty feudatories maintained their ground against the more powerful members of the empire. Their independence and privileges were recognised and secured to them by many edicts; and though hated and occasionally oppressed by the princes and ecclesiastical authorities, to whom in return they were a scourge and a pest, they continued to maintain tenaciously the good old privilege (as they termed it) of *Faustrecht*, which they had inherited from their fathers. Amid the obvious mischiefs attending such a state of society, it must be allowed that it is frequently the means of calling into exercise the highest heroic virtues. Men daily exposed to danger, and living by the constant exertion of their courage, acquired the virtues as well as the vices of a savage state; and among many instances of cruelty and rapine, occur not a few of the most exalted valour and generosity. If the fortress of a German knight was the dread of the wealthy merchant and abbot, it was often the ready and hospitable refuge of the weary pilgrim and oppressed peasant. Although the owner subsisted by the plunder of the rich, yet he was frequently beneficent to the poor, and beloved by his own family dependents

and allies. The spirit of chivalry doubtless contributed much to soften the character of these marauding nobles. A respect for themselves taught them generosity towards their prisoners, and certain acknowledged rules prevented many of the atrocities which it might have been expected would have marked these feuds. No German noble, for example, if made captive, was confined in fetters or in a dungeon, but remained a prisoner at large upon his parole (which was called *knightly ward*), either in the castle of his conqueror or in some other place assigned to him. The same species of honourable captivity was often indulged by the Emperor to offenders of a noble rank, of which some instances will be found in the following pages.

Such was the state of the German nobles, when, on the 7th of August, 1495, was published the memorable edict of Maximilian for the establishment of the public peace of the empire. By this ordinance, the right of private war was totally abrogated, under the penalty of the Ban of the empire, to be enforced by the Imperial Chamber then instituted. This was at once a sentence of anathema secular and spiritual, containing the dooms of outlawry and excommunication. This ordinance was highly acceptable to the princes, bishops, and free towns, who had little to gain and much to lose in these perpetual feuds; and they combined to enforce it with no small severity against the petty feudatories:—these, on the other hand, sensible that the very root of their importance consisted in their privilege of declaring private war, without which they foresaw they would not long be able to maintain their independence, struggled hard against the execution of this edict: by which their confederacies were declared unlawful, and all means taken from them of resisting their richer neighbours.

Upon the jarring interests of the princes and clergy on the one hand, and of the free knights and petty imperial

feudatories on the other, arise the incidents of the following drama. The hero, Goetz von Berlichingen, was in reality a zealous champion for the privileges of the free knights, and was repeatedly laid under the Ban of the empire for the feuds in which he was engaged, from which he was only released in consequence of high reputation for gallantry and generosity. His life was published at Nuremberg, 1731; and some account of his exploits, with a declaration of feud (*Fehdebrief*) issued by him against that city, will be found in Meusel's 'Inquiry into History,' vol. 4th.

While the princes and free knights were thus banded against each other, the peasants and bondsmen remained in the most abject state of ignorance and oppression. This occasioned at different times the most desperate insurrections, resembling in their nature, and in the atrocities committed by the furious insurgents, the rebellions of Tyler and Cade in England, or that of the *Jacquerie* in France. Such an event occurs in the following tragedy. There is also a scene founded upon the noted institution called the Secret or Invisible Tribunal. With this extraordinary judicatory, the members and executioners of which were unknown, and met in secret to doom to death those criminals whom other courts of justice could not reach, the English reader has been made acquainted by several translations from the German, particularly the excellent romances called Herman of Unna, and Alf von Duilman.

The following drama was written by the elegant author of the 'Sorrows of Werther,' in imitation, it is said, of the manner of Shakespeare. This resemblance is not to be looked for in the style or expression, but in the outline of the characters, and mode of conducting the incidents of the piece. In Germany it is the object of enthusiastic admiration; partly owing doubtless to the force of na-

tional partiality towards a performance in which the ancient manners of the country are faithfully and forcibly painted. Losing, however, this advantage, and under all the defects of a translation, the translator ventures to hope that in the following pages there will still be found something to excite interest. Some liberties have been taken with the original, in omitting two occasional disquisitions upon the civil law as practised in Germany.* Literal accuracy has been less studied in the translation, than an attempt to convey the spirit and general effect of the piece. Upon the whole, it is hoped the version will be found faithful; of which the translator is less distrustful, owing to the friendship of a gentleman of high literary eminence, who has obligingly taken the trouble of superintending the publication.

WALTER SCOTT.

EDINBURGH, *3rd February*, 1799.

* In the present revision these omitted portions are restored, whilst a few corrections have been made with a view to greater literalness.—ED.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MAXIMILIAN, *Emperor of Germany.*
GOETZ VON BERLICHINGEN, *a free knight of the empire.*
ELIZABETH, *his wife.*
MARIA, *his sister.*
CHARLES, *his son—a boy.*
GEORGE, *his page.*
BISHOP OF BAMBERG.
ADELBERT VON WEISLINGEN, *a free German knight of the empire.*
ADELAIDE VON WALLDORF, *widow of the COUNT VON WALLDORF.*
LIEBTRAUT, *a courtier of the Bishop's.*
ABBOT OF FULDA, *residing at the Bishop's court.*
OLEARIUS, *a doctor of laws.*
BROTHER MARTIN, *a monk.*
HANS VON SELBITZ,
FRANZ VON SICKINGEN, } *Free knights, in alliance with GOETZ.*
LERSE, *a trooper.*
FRANCIS, *esquire to WEISLINGEN.*
Female Attendant on ADELAIDE.
President, Accuser, and Avenger of the Secret Tribunal.
METZLER,
SIEVERS, } *Leaders of the insurgent peasantry.*
LINK,
KOHL,
WILD,
Imperial Commissioners.
Two Merchants of Nuremberg.
Magistrates of Heilbronn.
MAXIMILIAN STUMF, *a vassal of the Palgrave.*
An unknown.
Bride's father,
Bride, } *Peasants.*
Bridegroom,
Gipsy captain.
Gipsy mother and women.
STICKS and WOLF, *gipsies.*
Imperial captain.
Imperial officers.
Innkeeper.
Sentinel.
Sergeant-at-arms.

*Imperial soldiers—Troopers belonging to GOETZ, to SELBITZ, to SICKINGEN,
and to WEISLINGEN—Peasants—Gipsies—Judges of the Secret Tribunal
—Gaulers—Courtiers, &c., &c., &c.*

GOETZ VON BERLICHINGEN

WITH THE IRON HAND.

ACT I.

SCENE I. *An Inn at Schwarzenberg in Franconia.*

METZLER and SIEVERS, *two Swabian peasants, are seated at a table—At the fire, at some distance from them, two troopers from Bamberg—The Innkeeper.*

SIEVERS. Hänsel! Another cup of brandy—and Christian measure.

INNKEEPER. Thou art a Never-enough.

METZLER (*apart to SIEVERS*). Repeat that again about Berlichingen.—The Bambergers there are so angry they are almost black in the face.

SIEVERS. Bambergers!—What are they about here?

METZLER. Weislingen has been two days up yonder at the Castle with the Earl—they are his attendants—they came with him, I know not whence; they are waiting for him—He is going back to Bamberg.

SIEVERS. Who is that Weislingen?

METZLER. The Bishop of Bamberg's right hand! a powerful lord, who is lying in wait to play Goetz some trick.

SIEVERS. He had better take care of himself.

METZLER (*aside*). Prithee go on! (*Aloud.*) How long is it since Goetz had a new dispute with the Bishop? I thought all had been agreed and squared between them.

SIEVERS. Ay! Agreement with Priests!—When the Bishop saw he could do no good, and always got the worst of it, he pulled in his horns, and made haste to patch up a truce—and honest Berlichingen yielded to an absurd extent, as he always does when he has the advantage.

METZLER. God bless him! a worthy nobleman.

SIEVERS. Only think! Was it not shameful? They fell upon a page of his, to his no small surprise; but they will soon be mauled for that.

METZLER. How provoking that his last stroke should have missed. He must have been plaguily annoyed.

SIEVERS. I don't think anything has vexed him so much for a long time. Look you, all had been calculated to a nicety; the time the Bishop would come from the bath, with how many attendants, and which road; and had it not been betrayed by some traitor, Goetz would have blessed his bath for him, and rubbed him dry.

FIRST TROOPER. What are you prating there about our Bishop; do you want to pick a quarrel?

SIEVERS. Mind your own affairs; you have nothing to do with our table.

SECOND TROOPER. Who taught you to speak disrespectfully of our Bishop?

SIEVERS. Am I bound to answer *your* questions?—Look at the fool!

[*The first TROOPER boxes his ears.*]

METZLER. Smash the rascal! [*They attack each other.*]

SECOND TROOPER (*to METZLER*). Come on if you dare—

INNKEEPER (*separating them*). Will you be quiet? Zounds! Take yourself off if you have any scores to settle; in my house I will have order and decency. (*He pushes the TROOPERS out of doors.*)—And what are you about, you jackasses?

METZLER. No bad names, Hänsel! or your sconce shall pay for it. Come, comrade, we'll go and thrash those blackguards.

Enter two of BERLICHINGEN'S TROOPERS.

FIRST TROOPER. What's the matter?

SIEVERS. Ah! Good day, Peter!—Good day, Veit!—Whence come you?

SECOND TROOPER. Mind you don't let out whom we serve.

SIEVERS (*whispering*). Then your master Goetz isn't far off?

FIRST TROOPER. Hold your tongue!—Have you had a quarrel?

SIEVERS. You must have met the fellows without—they are Bambergers.

FIRST TROOPER. What brings them here?

SIEVERS. They escort Weislingen, who is up yonder at the Castle with the Earl.

FIRST TROOPER. Weislingen!

SECOND TROOPER (*aside to his companion*). Peter, that is grist to our mill—How long has he been here?

METZLER. Two days—but he is off to-day, as I heard one of his fellows say.

FIRST TROOPER (*aside*). Did I not tell you he was here?—We might have waited yonder long enough—Come, Veit—

SIEVERS. Help us first to drub the Bambergers.

SECOND TROOPER. There are already two of you—We must away—Farewell! [*Exeunt both TROOPERS.*]

SIEVERS. Scurvy dogs, these troopers! They won't strike a blow without pay.

METZLER. I could swear they have something in hand.—Whom do they serve?

SIEVERS. I am not to tell—They serve Goetz.

METZLER. So!—Well, now we'll cudgel those fellows outside—While I have a quarter-staff I care not for their spits.

SIEVERS. If we durst but once serve the princes in the same manner, who drag our skins over our ears! [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II. *A Cottage in a thick Forest.*

GOETZ VON BERLICHINGEN *discovered walking among the trees before the door.*

GOETZ. Where linger my servants?—I must walk up and down, or sleep will overcome me—Five days and nights already on the watch—It is hardly earned, this bit of life and freedom. But when I have caught thee, Weislingen, I shall take my ease. (*Fills a glass of wine*

and drinks; looks at the flask.)—Again empty.—George!—While this and my courage last, I can laugh at the ambition and chicanery of princes!—George!—You may send round your obsequious Weislingen to your uncles and cousins to calumniate my character—Be it so—I am on the alert.—Thou hast escaped me, Bishop; then thy dear Weislingen shall pay the score.—George!—Doesn't the boy hear?—George! George!

GEORGE (*entering in the cuirass of a full-grown man*).
Worshipful sir.

GOETZ. What kept you? Were you asleep?—What in the devil's name means this masquerade?—Come hither; you don't look amiss. Be not ashamed, boy; you look bravely. Ah! if you could but fill it!—Is it Hans' cuirass?

GEORGE. He wished to sleep a little, and unbuckled it.

GOETZ. He takes things easier than his master.

GEORGE. Do not be angry! I took it quietly away and put it on, then fetched my father's old sword from the wall, ran to the meadow, and drew it—

GOETZ. And laid about you, no doubt?—Rare times for the brambles and thorns!—Is Hans asleep?

GEORGE. He started up and cried out to me when you called—I was trying to unbuckle the cuirass when I heard you twice or thrice.

GOETZ. Go take back his cuirass, and tell him to be ready with his horses.

GEORGE. I have fed them well and they are ready bridled; you may mount when you will.

GOETZ. Bring me a stoup of wine. Give Hans a glass too, and tell him to be on the alert—there is good cause; I expect the return of my scouts every moment.

GEORGE. Ah! noble sir!

GOETZ. What's the matter?

GEORGE. May I not go with you?

GOETZ. Another time, George! when we waylay merchants and seize their waggons—

GEORGE. Another time!—You have said that so often.—O, this time, this time! I will only skulk behind; just keep on the look-out—I will gather up all the spent arrows for you.

GOETZ. Next time, George!—You must first have a doublet, a steel cap, and a lance.

GEORGE. Take me with you now!—Had I been with you last time, you would not have lost your cross-bow.

GOETZ. Do you know about that?

GEORGE. You threw it at your antagonist's head; one of his followers picked it up, and off with it he went.—Don't I know about it?

GOETZ. Did my people tell you?

GEORGE. O yes: and for that, I whistle them all sorts of tunes while we dress the horses, and teach them merry songs, too.

GOETZ. Thou art a brave boy.

GEORGE. Take me with you to prove myself so.

GOETZ. The next time, I promise you! You must not go to battle unarmed as you are. There is a time coming which will also require men. I tell thee boy, it will be a dear time. Princes shall offer their treasures for a man whom they now hate. Go, George, give Hans his cuirass again, and bring me wine. (*Exit GEORGE.*) Where can my people be? It is incomprehensible!—A monk! What brings him here so late?

Enter Brother MARTIN.

GOETZ. Good evening, reverend father! Whence come you so late? Man of holy rest, thou shamest many knights.

MARTIN. Thanks, noble sir! I am at present but an unworthy brother, if we come to titles. My cloister name is Augustin, but I like better to be called by my Christian name, Martin.

GOETZ. You are tired, brother Martin, and doubtless thirsty.

Enter GEORGE with wine.

GOETZ. Here, in good time, comes wine!

MARTIN. For me a draught of water. I dare not drink wine.

GOETZ. Is it against your vow?

MARTIN. Noble sir, to *drink* wine is not against my vow; but because *wine* is against my vow, therefore I drink it not.

GOETZ. How am I to understand that?

MARTIN. 'Tis well for thee that thou dost not understand it. Eating and drinking nourish man's life.

GOETZ. Well!

MARTIN. When thou hast eaten and drunken, thou art as it were new born, stronger, bolder, fitter for action. Wine rejoices the heart of man, and joyousness is the mother of every virtue. When thou hast drunk wine thou art double what thou shouldst be! twice as ingenious, twice as enterprising, and twice as active.

GOETZ. As I drink it, what you say is true.

MARTIN. 'Tis when thus taken in moderation that I speak of it. But we — [GEORGE brings water.]

GOETZ (*aside to GEORGE*). Go to the road which leads to Daxbach; lay thine ear close to the earth, and listen for the tread of horses. Return immediately.

MARTIN. But we, on the other hand, when we have eaten and drunken, are the reverse of what we should be. Our sluggish digestion depresses our mental powers; and in the indulgence of luxurious ease, desires are generated which grow too strong for our weakness.

GOETZ. One glass, brother Martin, will not disturb your sleep. You have travelled far to-day. (*Raises his glass.*) Here's to all fighting men!

MARTIN. With all my heart! (*They ring their glasses.*) I cannot abide idle people—yet will I not say that all monks are idle; they do what they can: I am just come from St. Bede, where I slept last night. The Prior took me into the garden; that is their hive. Excellent salad, cabbages in perfection, and such cauliflowers and artichokes as you will hardly find in Europe.

GOETZ. So that is not the life for you?

[*Goes out and looks anxiously after the boy. Returns.*]

MARTIN. Would that God had made me a gardener, or day labourer, I might then have been happy! My convent is Erfurt in Saxony; my Abbot loves me; he knows I cannot remain idle, and so he sends me round the country, wherever there is business to be done. I am on my way to the bishop of Constance.

GOETZ. Another glass. Good speed to you!

MARTIN. The same to you.

GOETZ. Why do you look at me so steadfastly, brother?

MARTIN. I am in love with your armour.

GOETZ. Would you like a suit? It is heavy and toilsome to the wearer.

MARTIN. What is not toilsome in this world?—But to me nothing is so much so as to renounce my very nature! Poverty, chastity, obedience—three vows, each of which taken singly seems the most dreadful to humanity—so insupportable are they all;—and to spend a life-time under this burthen, or to groan despairingly under the still heavier load of an evil conscience—Ah! Sir Knight, what are the toils of your life compared to the sorrows of a state, which, from a mistaken desire of drawing nearer to the Deity, condemns as crimes the best impulses of our nature, impulses by which we live, grow, and prosper!

GOETZ. Were your vow less sacred, I would give you a suit of armour and a steed, and we would ride out together.

MARTIN. Would to Heaven my shoulders had strength to bear armour, and my arm to unhorse an enemy!—Poor weak hand, accustomed from infancy to swing censers, to bear crosses and banners of peace, how couldst thou manage the lance and falchion? My voice, tuned only to Aves and Halleluiahs, would be a herald of my weakness to the enemy, while yours would overpower him; otherwise no vows should keep me from entering an order founded by the Creator himself.

GOETZ. To your happy return!

[*Drinks.*]

MARTIN. I drink that only in compliment to you! A return to my prison must ever be unhappy. When you, Sir Knight, return to your castle, with the consciousness of your courage and strength, which no fatigue can overcome; when you, for the first time, after a long absence, stretch yourself unarmed upon your bed, secure from the attack of enemies, and resign yourself to a sleep sweeter than the draught after a long thirst—then can you speak of happiness.

GOETZ. And accordingly it comes but seldom!

MARTIN (*with growing ardour*). But when it does come, it is a foretaste of paradise.—When you return home

laden with the spoils of your enemies, and, remember, "such a one I struck from his horse ere he could discharge his piece—such another I overthrew, horse and man;" then you ride to your castle, and——

GOETZ. And what?

MARTIN. And your wife—(*Fills a glass.*) To her health! (*He wipes his eyes.*) You have one?

GOETZ. A virtuous, noble wife!

MARTIN. Happy the man who possesses a virtuous wife, his life is doubled. This blessing was denied me, yet was woman the glory or crown of creation.

GOETZ (*aside*). I grieve for him. The sense of his condition preys upon his heart.

Enter GEORGE, breathless.

GEORGE. My lord, my lord, I hear horses in full gallop!—two of them—"Tis they for certain.

GOETZ. Bring out my steed; let Hans mount. Farewell, dear brother, God be with you. Be cheerful and patient. He will give you ample scope.

MARTIN. Let me request your name.

GOETZ. Pardon me—Farewell! [*Gives his left hand.*

MARTIN. Why do you give the left?—Am I unworthy of the knightly right hand?

GOETZ. Were you the Emperor, you must be satisfied with this. My right hand, though not useless in combat, is unresponsive to the grasp of affection. It is one with its mailed gauntlet—You see, it is *iron*!

MARTIN. Then art thou Goetz of Berlichingen. I thank thee, Heaven, who hast shown me the man whom princes hate, but to whom the oppressed throng! (*He takes his right hand.*) Withdraw not this hand, let me kiss it.

GOETZ. You must not!

MARTIN. Let me, let me—Thou hand, more worthy even than the saintly relique through which the most sacred blood has flowed! lifeless instrument, quickened by the noblest spirit's faith in God.

[GOETZ adjusts his helmet, and takes his lance.

MARTIN. There was a monk among us about a year ago, who visited you when your hand was shot off at the siege of Landshut. He used to tell us what you suffered, and your grief at being disabled for your profession of arms; till you remembered having heard of one who had also lost a hand, and yet served long as a gallant knight—I shall never forget it.

Enter the two TROOPERS. They speak apart with GOETZ.

MARTIN (*continuing*). I shall never forget his words uttered in the noblest, the most childlike trust in God: "If I had twelve hands, what would they avail me without thy grace? then may I with only one——"

GOETZ. In the wood of Haslach then. (*Turns to MARTIN.*) Farewell, worthy brother! [*Embraces him.*

MARTIN. Forget me not, as I shall never forget thee!

[*Exeunt GOETZ and his TROOPERS.*

MARTIN. How my heart beat at the sight of him. He spoke not, yet my spirit recognised his. What rapture to behold a great man!

GEORGE. Reverend sir, you will sleep here?

MARTIN. Can I have a bed?

GEORGE. No, sir! I know of beds only by hearsay; in our quarters there is nothing but straw.

MARTIN. It will serve. What is thy name?

GEORGE. George, reverend sir.

MARTIN. George! Thou hast a gallant patron saint.

GEORGE. They say he was a trooper; that is what I intend to be!

MARTIN. Stop! (*Takes a picture from his breviary and gives it to him.*) There behold him—follow his example; be brave, and fear God. [*Exit into the cottage.*

GEORGE. Ah! what a splendid grey horse! If I had but one like that—and the golden armour. There is an ugly dragon. At present I shoot nothing but sparrows. O, St. George! make me but tall and strong; give me a lance, armour, and such a horse, and then let the dragons come! [*Exit.*

SCENE III. *An Apartment in Jaxthausen, the Castle of Goetz von Berlichingen.*

ELIZABETH, MARIA, and CHARLES discovered.

CHARLES. Pray now, dear aunt, tell me again that story about the good child; it is so pretty——

MARIA. Do you tell it to me, little rogue! that I may see if you have paid attention.

CHARLES. Wait then till I think.—“There was once upon”—Yes—“There was once upon a time a child, and his mother was sick; so the child went——”

MARIA. No, no!—“Then his mother said, ‘Dear child,’——”

CHARLES. “‘I am sick,’——”

MARIA. “‘And cannot go out.’”

CHARLES. “And gave him money and said, ‘Go and buy yourself a breakfast.’ There came a poor man——”

MARIA. “The child went. There met him an old man who was——” Now, Charles!

CHARLES. “Who was—old——”

MARIA. Of course. Who was hardly able to walk, and said, ‘Dear child,’——”

CHARLES. “‘Give me something; I have eaten not a morsel yesterday or to-day.’ Then the child gave him the money——”

MARIA. “That should have bought his breakfast.”

CHARLES. “Then the old man said——”

MARIA. “Then the old man took the child by the hand——”

CHARLES. “By the hand, and said—and became a fine beautiful saint—and said—‘Dear child,’——”

MARIA. “‘The holy Virgin rewards thee for thy benevolence through me: whatever sick person thou touchest’——”

CHARLES. “‘With thy hand’——” It was the right hand, I think.

MARIA. Yes.

CHARLES. “‘He will get well directly.’”

MARIA. “Then the child ran home, and could not speak for joy——”

CHARLES. "And fell upon his mother's neck and wept for joy."

MARIA. "Then the mother cried, 'What is this?' and became——" Now, Charles.

CHARLES. "Became—became——"

MARIA. You do not attend—"and became well. And the child cured kings and emperors, and became so rich that he built a great abbey."

ELIZABETH. I cannot understand why my husband stays. He has been away five days and nights, and he hoped to have finished his adventure so quickly.

MARIA. I have long felt uneasy. Were I married to a man who continually incurred such danger, I should die within the first year.

ELIZABETH. I thank God that he has made me of firmer stuff!

CHARLES. But must my father ride out, if it is so dangerous?

MARIA. Such is his good pleasure.

ELIZABETH. He must indeed, dear Charles!

CHARLES. Why?

ELIZABETH. Do you not remember the last time he rode out, when he brought you those nice things?

CHARLES. Will he bring me anything now?

ELIZABETH. I believe so. Listen: there was a tailor at Stutgard who was a capital archer, and had gained the prize at Cologne.

CHARLES. Was it much?

ELIZABETH. A hundred dollars; and afterwards they would not pay him.

MARIA. That was naughty, eh, Charles?

CHARLES. Naughty people!

ELIZABETH. The tailor came to your father and begged him to get his money for him; then your father rode out and intercepted a party of merchants from Cologne, and kept them prisoners till they paid the money. Would you not have ridden out too?

CHARLES. No; for one must go through a dark thick wood, where there are gipsies and witches——

ELIZABETH. You're a fine fellow; afraid of witches!

MARIA. Charles, it is far better to live at home in your

castle, like a quiet Christian knight. One may find opportunities enough of doing good on one's own lands. Even the worthiest knights do more harm than good in their excursions.

ELIZABETH. Sister, you know not what you are saying.—God grant our boy may become braver as he grows up, and not take after that Weislingen, who has dealt so faithlessly with my husband.

MARIA. We will not judge, Elizabeth.—My brother is highly incensed, and so are you; I am only a spectator in the matter, and can be more impartial.

ELIZABETH. Weislingen cannot be defended.

MARIA. What I have heard of him has interested me.—Even your husband relates many instances of his former goodness and affection.—How happy was their youth when they were both pages of honour to the Margrave!

ELIZABETH. That may be. But only tell me, how can a man ever have been good who lays snares for his best and truest friend? who has sold his services to the enemies of my husband; and who strives, by invidious misrepresentations, to poison the mind of our noble emperor, who is so gracious to us? [A horn is heard.]

CHARLES. Papa! papa! the warder sounds his horn! Joy! joy! Open the gate!

ELIZABETH. There he comes with booty!

Enter PETER.

PETER. We have fought—we have conquered!—God save you, noble ladies!

ELIZABETH. Have you captured Weislingen?

PETER. Himself, and three followers.

ELIZABETH. How came you to stay so long?

PETER. We lay in wait for him between Nuremberg and Bamberg, but he would not come, though we knew he had set out. At length we heard of his whereabouts; he had struck off sideways, and was staying quietly with the earl at Schwarzenberg.

ELIZABETH. They would also fain make the earl my husband's enemy.

PETER. I immediately told my master.—Up and away

we rode into the forest of Haslach. And it was curious, that while we were riding along that night, a shepherd was watching, and five wolves fell upon the flock and attacked them stoutly. Then my master laughed, and said, "Good luck to us all, dear comrades, both to you and us!" And the good omen overjoyed us. Just then Weislingen came riding towards us with four attendants—

MARIA. How my heart beats!

PETER. My comrade and I, as our master had commanded, threw ourselves suddenly on him, and clung to him as if we had grown together, so that he could not move, while my master and Hans fell upon the servants, and overpowered them. They were all taken, except one who escaped.

ELIZABETH. I am curious to see him. Will he arrive soon?

PETER. They are riding through the valley, and will be here in a quarter of an hour.

MARIA. He is no doubt cast down and dejected?

PETER. He looks gloomy enough.

MARIA. It will grieve me to see his distress!

ELIZABETH. O! I must get food ready. You are no doubt all hungry?

PETER. Hungry enough, in truth.

ELIZABETH (*to Maria*). Take the cellar keys and bring the best wine. They have deserved it. [*Exit ELIZABETH.*]

CHARLES. I'll go too, aunt.

MARIA. Come then, boy. [*Exeunt CHARLES and MARIA.*]

PETER. He'll never be his father, else he would have gone with me to the stable.

Enter GOETZ, WEISLINGEN, HANS, and other TROOPERS.

GOETZ (*laying his helmet and sword on a table*). Unbuckle my armour, and give me my doublet. Ease will refresh me. Brother Martin, thou saidst truly. You have kept us long on the watch, Weislingen!

[*WEISLINGEN paces up and down in silence.*]

GOETZ. Be of good cheer! Come, unarm yourself! Where are your clothes? I hope nothing has been lost. (*To the attendants.*) Go, ask his servants; open the baggage, and see that nothing is missing. Or I can lend you some of mine.

WEISLINGEN. Let me remain as I am—it is all one.

GOETZ. I can give you a handsome doublet, but it is only of linen; it has grown too tight for me. I wore it at the marriage of my Lord the Palsgrave, when your bishop was so incensed at me. About a fortnight before I had sunk two of his vessels upon the Maine—I was going upstairs in the Stag at Heidelberg, with Franz von Sickingen. Before you get quite to the top, there is a landing-place with iron rails—there stood the bishop, and gave his hand to Franz as he passed, and to me also as I followed close behind him. I laughed in my sleeve, and went to the Landgrave of Hanau, who was always a kind friend to me, and said, "The bishop has given me his hand, but I'll wager he did not know me." The bishop heard me, for I was speaking loud on purpose. He came to us angrily, and said, "True, I gave thee my hand, because I knew thee not." To which I answered, "I know that, my lord; and so here you have your shake of the hand back again!" The manikin grew red as a Turkey cock with spite, and he ran up into the room and complained to the Palsgrave Lewis and the Prince of Nassau. We have laughed over the scene again and again.

WEISLINGEN. I wish you would leave me to myself.

GOETZ. Why so? I entreat you be of good cheer. You are my prisoner, but I will not abuse my power.

WEISLINGEN. I have no fear of that. That is your duty as a knight.

GOETZ. And you know how sacred it is to me.

WEISLINGEN. I am your prisoner—the rest matters not.

GOETZ. You should not say so. Had you been taken by a prince, fettered and cast into a dungeon, your gaoler directed to drive sleep from your eyes—

Enter SERVANTS with clothes. WEISLINGEN unarms himself. Enter CHARLES.

CHARLES. Good morrow, papa!

GOETZ (*kisses him*). Good morrow, boy! How have you been this long time?

CHARLES. Very well, father! Aunt says I am a good boy.

GOETZ. Does she?

CHARLES. Have you brought me anything?

GOETZ. Nothing this time.

CHARLES. I have learned a great deal.

GOETZ. Ay!

CHARLES. Shall I tell you about the good child?

GOETZ. After dinner.

CHARLES. I know something else, too.

GOETZ. What may that be?

CHARLES. "Jaxthausen is a village and castle on the Jaxt, which has appertained in property and heritage for two hundred years to the Lords of Berlichingen——"

GOETZ. Do you know the Lord of Berlichingen?
(CHARLES *stares at him. Aside.*) His learning is so abstruse that he does not know his own father. To whom does Jaxthausen belong?

CHARLES. "Jaxthausen is a village and castle upon the Jaxt——"

GOETZ. I did not ask that. I knew every path, pass, and ford about the place, before ever I knew the name of the village, castle, or river.—Is your mother in the kitchen?

CHARLES. Yes, papa! They are cooking a lamb and turnips.

GOETZ. Do you know that too, Jack Turnspit?

CHARLES. And my aunt is roasting an apple for me to eat after dinner——

GOETZ. Can't you eat it raw?

CHARLES. It tastes better roasted.

GOETZ. You must have a tit bit, must you?—Weislingen, I will be with you immediately. I must go and see my wife.—Come, Charles!

CHARLES. Who is that man?

GOETZ. Bid him welcome. Tell him to be merry.

CHARLES. There's my hand for you, man! Be merry—for the dinner will soon be ready.

WEISLINGEN (*takes up the child and kisses him*). Happy boy! that knowest no worse evil than the delay of dinner. May you live to have much joy in your son, Berlichingen!

GOETZ. Where there is most light the shades are deepest. Yet I should thank God for it. We'll see what they are about.
[Exit with CHARLES and SERVANTS.]

WEISLINGEN. O that I could but wake and find this all a dream! In the power of Berlichingen!—from whom I had scarcely detached myself—whose remembrance I shunned like fire—whom I hoped to overpower! and he still the old true-hearted Goetz! Gracious God! what will be the end of it? O Adelbert! Led back to the very hall where we played as children; when thou didst love and prize him as thy soul! Who can know him and hate him? Alas! I am so thoroughly insignificant here. Happy days! ye are gone. There, in his chair by the chimney, sat old Berlichingen, while we played around him, and loved each other like cherubs! How anxious the bishop and all my friends will be! Well, the whole country will sympathize with my misfortune. But what avails it? Can they give me the peace after which I strive?

Re-enter GOETZ with wine and goblets.

GOETZ. We'll take a glass while dinner is preparing. Come, sit down—think yourself at home! Fancy you've come once more to see Goetz. It is long since we have sat and emptied a flagon together. (*Lifts his glass.*) Come: a light heart!

WEISLINGEN. Those times are gone by.

GOETZ. God forbid! To be sure, we shall hardly pass more pleasant days than those we spent together at the Margrave's court, when we were inseparable night and day. I think with pleasure on my youth. Do you remember the scuffle I had with the Polander, whose pomaded and frizzled hair I chanced to rub with my sleeve?

WEISLINGEN. It was at table; and he struck at you with a knife.

GOETZ. I gave it him, however; and you had a quarrel upon that account with his comrades. We always stuck together like brave fellows, and were the admiration of every one. (*Raises his glass.*) Castor and Pollux! It used to rejoice my heart when the Margrave so called us.

WEISLINGEN. The bishop of Wurtzburg first gave us the name.

GOETZ. That bishop was a learned man, and withal so

kind and gentle. I shall remember as long as I live how he used to caress us, praise our friendship, and say, "Happy is the man who is his friend's twin-brother."

WEISLINGEN. No more of that.

GOETZ. Why not? I know nothing more delightful after fatigue than to talk over old times. Indeed, when I recall to mind how we bore good and bad fortune together, and were all in all to each other, and how I thought this was to continue for ever. Was not that my sole comfort when my hand was shot away at Landshut, and you nursed and tended me like a brother? I hoped Adelbert would in future be my right hand. And now——

WEISLINGEN. Alas!

GOETZ. Hadst thou but listened to me when I begged thee to go with me to Brabant, all would have been well. But then that unhappy turn for court-dangling seized thee, and thy coquetting and flirting with the women. I always told thee, when thou wouldst mix with these lounging, vain court sycophants, and entertain them with gossip about unlucky matches and seduced girls, scandal about absent friends, and all such trash as they take interest in—I always said, Adelbert, thou wilt become a rogue!

WEISLINGEN. To what purpose is all this?

GOETZ. Would to God I could forget it, or that it were otherwise! Art thou not free and nobly born as any in Germany; independent, subject to the emperor alone; and dost thou crouch among vassals? What is the bishop to thee? Granted, he is thy neighbour, and can do thee a shrewd turn; hast thou not power and friends to requite him in kind? Art thou ignorant of the dignity of a free knight, who depends only upon God, the emperor, and himself, that thou degradest thyself to be the courtier of a stubborn, jealous priest?

WEISLINGEN. Let me speak!

GOETZ. What hast thou to say?

WEISLINGEN. You look upon the princes as the wolf upon the shepherd. And can you blame them for defending their territories and property? Are they a moment secure from the unruly knights, who plunder their vassals

even upon the high-roads, and sack their castles and villages? Upon the other hand, our country's enemies threaten to overrun the lands of our beloved emperor, yet, while he needs the princes' assistance, they can scarce defend their own lives; is it not our good genius which at this moment leads them to devise means of procuring peace for Germany, of securing the administration of justice, and giving to great and small the blessings of quiet? And can you blame us, Berlichingen, for securing the protection of the powerful princes, our neighbours, whose assistance is at hand, rather than relying on that of the emperor, who is so far removed from us, and is hardly able to protect himself?

GOETZ. Yes, yes, I understand you. Weislingen, were the princes as you paint them, we should all have what we want. Peace and quiet! No doubt! Every bird of prey naturally likes to eat its plunder undisturbed. The general weal! If they would but take the trouble to study that. And they trifle with the emperor shamefully. Every day some new tinker or other comes to give his opinion. The emperor means well, and would gladly put things to rights; but because he happens to understand a thing readily, and by a single word, can put a thousand hands into motion, he thinks everything will be as speedily and as easily accomplished. Ordinance upon ordinance is promulgated, each nullifying the last, while the princes obey only those which serve their own interest, and prate of peace and security of the empire, while they are treading under foot their weaker neighbours. I will be sworn, many a one thanks God in his heart that the Turk keeps the emperor fully employed!

WEISLINGEN. You view things your own way.

GOETZ. So does every one. The question is, which is the right way to view them? And your plans at least shun the day.

WEISLINGEN. You may say what you will; I am your prisoner.

GOETZ. If your conscience is free, so are you. How was it with the general tranquillity? I remember going as a boy of sixteen with the Margrave to the Imperial Diet. What harangues the princes made! And the

clergy were the most vociferous of all. Your bishop thundered into the emperor's ears his regard for justice, till one thought it had become part and parcel of his being. And now he has imprisoned a page of mine, at a time when our quarrels were all accommodated, and I had buried them in oblivion. Is not all settled between us? What does he want with the boy?

WEISLINGEN. It was done without his knowledge.

GOETZ. Then why does he not release him?

WEISLINGEN. He did not conduct himself as he ought.

GOETZ. Not conduct himself as he ought? By my honour he performed his duty, as surely as he has been imprisoned both with your knowledge and the bishop's! Do you think I am come into the world this very day, that I cannot see what all this means?

WEISLINGEN. You are suspicious, and do us wrong.

GOETZ. Weislingen, shall I deal openly with you? Inconsiderable as I am, I am a thorn in your side, and Selbitz and Sickingen are no less so, because we are firmly resolved to die sooner than to thank any one but God for the air we breathe, or pay homage to any one but the emperor. This is why they worry me in every possible way, blacken my character with the emperor, and among my friends and neighbours, and spy about for advantage over me. They would have me out of the way at any price; that was your reason for imprisoning the page whom you knew I had dispatched for intelligence: and now you say he did not conduct himself as he should do, because he would not betray my secrets. And you, Weislingen, are their tool!

WEISLINGEN. Berlichingen!

GOETZ. Not a word more. I am an enemy to long explanations; they deceive either the maker or the hearer, and generally both.

Enter CHARLES.

CHARLES. Dinner is ready, father!

GOETZ. Good news! Come, I hope the company of my women folk will amuse you. You always liked the girls. Ay, they can tell many pretty stories about you. Come!

[Exeunt.]

SCENE IV. *The Bishop of Bamberg's Palace.*

The BISHOP, the ABBOT of Fulda, OLEARIUS, LIEBTRAUT, and COURTIERES at table. The dessert and wine before them.

BISHOP. Are there many of the German nobility studying at Bologna?

OLEARIUS. Both nobles and citizens; and, I do not exaggerate in saying that they acquire the most brilliant reputation. It is a proverb in the university:—"As studious as a German noble." For while the citizens display a laudable diligence, in order to compensate by learning for their want of birth, the nobles strive, with praiseworthy emulation, to enhance their ancestral dignity by superior attainments.

ABBOT. Indeed!

LIEBTRAUT. What may one not live to hear. We live and learn, as the proverb says. "As studious as a German noble." I never heard that before.

OLEARIUS. Yes, they are the admiration of the whole university. Some of the oldest and most learned will soon be coming back with their doctor's degree. The emperor will doubtless be happy to entrust to them the highest offices.

BISHOP. He cannot fail to do so.

ABBOT. Do you know, for instance, a young man—a Hessian?—

OLEARIUS. There are many Hessians with us.

ABBOT. His name is—is— Does nobody remember it? His mother was a Von— Oh! his father had but one eye, and was a marshal—

LIEBTRAUT. Von Wildenholz!

ABBOT. Right. Von Wildenholz.

OLEARIUS. I know him well. A young man of great abilities. He is particularly esteemed for his talent in disputation.

ABBOT. He has that from his mother.

LIEBTRAUT. Yes; but his father would never praise her for that quality.

BISHOP. How call you the emperor who wrote your *Corpus Juris*?

OLEARIUS. Justinian.

BISHOP. A worthy prince:—here's to his memory!

OLEARIUS. To his memory! *[They drink.]*

ABBOT. That must be a fine book.

OLEARIUS. It may be called a book of books; a digest of all laws; there you find the sentence ready for every case, and where the text is antiquated or obscure, the deficiency is supplied by notes, with which the most learned men have enriched this truly admirable work.

ABBOT. A digest of all laws!—Indeed!—Then the ten commandments must be in it.

OLEARIUS. *Implicitè*; not *explicitè*.

ABBOT. That's what I mean; plainly set down, without any explication.

BISHOP. But the best is, you tell us that a state can be maintained in the most perfect tranquillity and subordination, by receiving and rightly following that statute-book.

OLEARIUS. Doubtless.

BISHOP. All doctors of laws!

OLEARIUS. I'll tell them of this abroad. *[They drink.]*

Would to heaven that men thought thus in my country.

ABBOT. Whence come you, most learned sir?

OLEARIUS. From Frankfort, at your eminence's service!

BISHOP. You gentlemen of the law, then, are not held in high estimation there?—How comes that?

OLEARIUS. It is strange enough—when I last went there to collect my father's effects, the mob almost stoned me, when they heard I was a lawyer.

ABBOT. God bless me!

OLEARIUS. It is because their tribunal, which they hold in great respect, is composed of people totally ignorant of the Roman law. An intimate acquaintance with the internal condition of the town, and also of its foreign relations, acquired through age and experience, is deemed a sufficient qualification. They decide according to certain established edicts of their own, and some old customs recognised in the city and neighbourhood.

ABBOT. That's very right.

OLEARIUS. But far from sufficient. The life of man is short, and in one generation cases of every description

cannot occur; our statute-book is a collection of precedents, furnished by the experience of many centuries. Besides, the wills and opinions of men are variable; one man deems right to-day, what another disapproves to-morrow; and confusion and injustice are the inevitable results. Law determines absolutely, and its decrees are immutable.

ABBOT. That's certainly better.

OLEARIUS. But the common people won't acknowledge that; and, eager as they are after novelty, they hate any innovation in their laws, which leads them out of the beaten track, be it ever so much for the better. They hate a jurist as if he were a cut-purse or a subverter of the state, and become furious, if one attempts to settle among them.

LIEBTRAUT. You come from Frankfort?—I know the place well—we tasted your good cheer at the emperor's coronation. You say your name is Olearius—I know no one in the town of your name.

OLEARIUS. My father's name was Oilman—But after the example, and with the advice of many jurists, I have latinised the name to Olearius for the decoration of the title-page of my legal treatises.

LIEBTRAUT. You did well to translate yourself: a prophet is not honoured in his own country—in your native guise you might have shared the same fate.

OLEARIUS. That was not the reason.

LIEBTRAUT. All things have two reasons.

ABBOT. A prophet is not honoured in his own country.

LIEBTRAUT. But do you know why, most reverend sir?

ABBOT. Because he was born and bred there.

LIEBTRAUT. Well, that may be one reason. The other is, because, upon a nearer acquaintance with these gentlemen, the halo of glory and honour shed around them by the distant haze totally disappears; they are then seen to be nothing more than tiny rushlights!

OLEARIUS. It seems you are placed here to tell pleasant truths.

LIEBTRAUT. As I have wit enough to discover them, I do not lack courage to utter them.

OLEARIUS. Yet you lack the art of applying them well.

LIEBTRAUT. It is no matter where you place a cupping-glass, provided it draws blood.

OLEARIUS. Barbers are known by their dress, and no one takes offence at their scurvy jests. Let me advise you as a precaution to bear the badge of your order—a cap and bells!

LIEBTRAUT. Where did you take your degree? I only ask, so that, should I ever take a fancy to a fool's cap, I could at once go to the right shop.

OLEARIUS. You carry face enough.

LIEBTRAUT. And you paunch.

[*The BISHOP and ABBOT laugh.*]

BISHOP. Not so warm, gentlemen!—Some other subject. At table all should be fair and quiet. Choose another subject, Liebtraut.

LIEBTRAUT. Opposite Frankfort lies a village, called Sachsenhausen—

OLEARIUS (*to the BISHOP*). What news of the Turkish expedition, your excellency?

BISHOP. The emperor has most at heart, first of all to restore peace to the empire, put an end to feuds, and secure the strict administration of justice: then, according to report, he will go in person against the enemies of his country and of Christendom. At present internal dissensions give him enough to do; and the empire, despite half a hundred treaties of peace, is one scene of murder. Franconia, Swabia, the Upper Rhine, and the surrounding countries are laid waste by presumptuous and reckless knights.—And here, at Bamberg, Sickingen, Selbitz with one leg, and Goetz with the iron hand, scoff at the imperial authority.

ABBOT. If his Majesty does not exert himself, these fellows will at last thrust us into sacks.

LIEBTRAUT. He would be a sturdy fellow indeed who should thrust the wine-butt of Fulda into a sack!

BISHOP. Goetz especially has been for many years my mortal foe, and annoys me beyond description. But it will not last long, I hope. The emperor holds his court at Augsburg. We have taken our measures, and cannot fail of success.—Doctor, do you know Adelbert von Weisingen?

OLEARIUS. No, your eminence.

BISHOP. If you stay till his arrival, you will have the pleasure of seeing a most noble, accomplished, and gallant knight.

OLEARIUS. He must be an excellent man indeed to deserve such praises from such a mouth.

LIEBTRAUT. And yet he was not bred at any university.

BISHOP. We know that. (*The attendants throng to the window.*) What's the matter?

ATTENDANT. Färber, Weislingen's servant, is riding in at the castle-gate.

BISHOP. See what he brings. He most likely comes to announce his master.

[*Exit LIEBTRAUT.—They stand up and drink.*]

LIEBTRAUT re-enters.

BISHOP. What news?

LIEBTRAUT. I wish another had to tell it—Weislingen is a prisoner.

BISHOP. What?

LIEBTRAUT. Berlichingen has seized him and three troopers near Haslach—One is escaped to tell you.

ABBOT. A Job's messenger!

OLEARIUS. I grieve from my heart.

BISHOP. I will see the servant; bring him up—I will speak with him myself. Conduct him into my cabinet.

[*Exit BISHOP.*]

ABBOT (*sitting down*). Another draught, however.

[*The SERVANTS fill round.*]

OLEARIUS. Will not your reverence take a turn in the garden? "Post coenam stabis, seu passus mille meabis."

LIEBTRAUT. In truth, sitting is unhealthy for you. You might get an apoplexy. (*The ABBOT rises. Aside.*) Let me but once get him out of doors, I will give him exercise enough!

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE V. Jaxthausen.

MARIA, WEISLINGEN.

MARIA. You love me, you say. I willingly believe it, and hope to be happy with you, and make you happy also.

WEISLINGEN. I feel nothing but that I am entirely thine. [*Embraces her.*]

MARIA. Softly!—I gave you one kiss for earnest, but you must not take possession of what is only yours conditionally.

WEISLINGEN. You are too strict, Maria! Innocent love is pleasing in the sight of Heaven, instead of giving offence.

MARIA. It may be so. But I think differently; for I have been taught that caresses are, like fetters, strong through their union, and that maidens, when they love, are weaker than Sampson after the loss of his locks.

WEISLINGEN. Who taught you so?

MARIA. The abbess of my convent. Till my sixteenth year I was with her—and it is only with you that I enjoy happiness like that her company afforded me. She had loved, and could tell—She had a most affectionate heart. Oh! she was an excellent woman!

WEISLINGEN. Then you resemble her. (*Takes her hand.*) What will become of me when I am compelled to leave you?

MARIA (*withdrawing his hand*). You will feel some regret, I hope, for I know what my feelings will be. But you must away!

WEISLINGEN. I know it, dearest! and I will—for well I feel what happiness I shall purchase by this sacrifice! Now, blessed be your brother, and the day on which he rode out to capture me!

MARIA. His heart was full of hope for you and himself. Farewell! he said, at his departure, I go to recover my friend.

WEISLINGEN. That he has done. Would that I had studied the arrangement and security of my property, instead of neglecting it, and dallying at that worthless court!—then couldst thou have been instantly mine.

MARIA. Even delay has its pleasures.

WEISLINGEN. Say not so, Maria, else I shall fear that thy heart is less warm than mine. True, I deserve punishment, but what hopes will brighten every step of my journey! To be wholly thine, to live only for thee and thy circle of friends—far removed from the world, in the enjoyment of all the raptures which two hearts can

mutually bestow. What is the favour of princes, what the applause of the universe, to such simple, yet unequalled felicity? Many have been my hopes and wishes; but this happiness surpasses them all.

Enter GOETZ.

GOETZ. Your page has returned. He can scarcely utter a word for hunger and fatigue. My wife has ordered him some refreshment. Thus much I have gathered: the bishop will not give up my page—imperial commissioners are to be appointed, and a day named, upon which the matter may be adjusted. Be that as it may, Adelbert, you are free. Pledge me but your hand that you will for the future give neither open nor secret assistance to my enemies.

WEISLINGEN. Here I grasp thy hand. From this moment be our friendship and confidence, firm and unalterable as a primary law of nature! Let me take this hand also (*takes MARIA's hand*), and with it the possession of this most noble lady.

GOETZ. May I say yes for you?

MARIA (*timidly*). If—if it is your wish—

GOETZ. Happily our wishes do not differ on this point. Thou need'st not blush—the glance of thine eye betrays thee. Well then, Weislingen, join hands, and I say *Amen!* My friend and brother! I thank thee, sister; thou canst do more than spin flax, for thou hast drawn a thread which can fetter this wandering bird of paradise. Yet you look not quite at your ease, Adelbert. What troubles you? I am perfectly happy! What I but hoped in a dream, I now see with my eyes, and feel as though I was still dreaming. Now my dream is explained. I thought last night that, in token of reconciliation, I gave you this iron hand, and that you held it so fast that it broke away from my arm; I started, and awoke. Had I but dreamed a little longer, I should have seen how you gave me a new living hand. You must away this instant, to put your castle and property in order. That cursed court has made you neglect both. I must call my wife.—Elizabeth!

MARIA. How overjoyed my brother is!

WEISLINGEN. Yet I am still more so.

GOETZ (*to MARIA*). You will have a pleasant residence.

MARIA. Franconia is a fine country.

WEISLINGEN. And I may venture to say that my castle lies in the most fertile and delicious part of it.

GOETZ. That you may, and I can confirm it. Look you, here flows the Maine, around a hill clothed with cornfields and vineyards, its top crowned with a Gothic castle; then the river makes a sharp turn, and glides round behind the rock on which the castle is built. The windows of the great hall look perpendicularly down upon the river, and command a prospect of many miles in extent.

Enter ELIZABETH.

ELIZABETH. What wouldst thou?

GOETZ. You too must give your hand, and say, God bless you! They are a pair.

ELIZABETH. So soon?

GOETZ. But not unexpectedly.

ELIZABETH. May you ever adore her as ardently as while you sought her hand. And then, as your love, so be your happiness!

WEISLINGEN. Amen! I seek no happiness but under this condition.

GOETZ. The bridegroom, my love, must leave us for awhile; for this great change will involve many smaller ones. He must first withdraw himself from the bishop's court, in order that their friendship may gradually cool. Then he must rescue his property from the hands of selfish stewards, and . . . But come, sister; come, Elizabeth; let us leave him; his page has no doubt private messages for him.

WEISLINGEN. Nothing but what you may hear.

GOETZ. 'Tis needless. Franconians and Swabians! Ye are now more closely united than ever. Now we shall be able to keep the princes in check.

[Exeunt GOETZ, ELIZABETH, MARIA.]

WEISLINGEN (*alone*). God in heaven! And canst Thou have reserved such happiness for one so unworthy? It is too much for my heart. How meanly I depended upon wretched fools, whom I thought I was governing, upon the smile of princes, upon the homage of those around me!

Goetz, my faithful Goetz, thou hast restored me to myself, and thou, Maria, hast completed my reformation. I feel free, as if brought from a dungeon into the open air. Bamberg will I never see more—will snap all the shameful bonds that have held me beneath myself. My heart expands, and never more will I degrade myself by struggling for a greatness that is denied me. He alone is great and happy who fills his own station of independence, and has neither to command nor to obey.

Enter FRANCIS.

FRANCIS. God save you, noble sir! I bring you so many salutations that I know not where to begin. Bamberg, and ten miles round, cry with a thousand voices, God save you!

WEISLINGEN. Welcome, Francis! Bring'st thou aught else?

FRANCIS. You are held in such consideration at court that it cannot be expressed.

WEISLINGEN. That will not last long.

FRANCIS. As long as you live; and after your death it will shine with more lustre than the brazen characters on a monument. How they took your misfortune to heart!

WEISLINGEN. And what said the bishop?

FRANCIS. His eager curiosity poured out question upon question, without giving me time to answer. He knew of your accident already; for Färber, who escaped from Haslach, had brought him the tidings. But he wished to hear every particular. He asked so anxiously whether you were wounded. I told him you were whole, from the hair of your head to the nail of your little toe.

WEISLINGEN. And what said he to the proposals?

FRANCIS. He was ready at first to give up the page and a ransom to boot for your liberty. But when he heard you were to be dismissed without ransom, and merely to give your parole that the boy should be set free, he was for putting off Berlichingen with some pretence. He charged me with a thousand messages to you, more than I can ever utter. O how he harangued! It was a long sermon upon the text, "I cannot live without Weislingen!"

WEISLINGEN. He must learn to do so.

FRANCIS. What mean you? He said "Bid him hasten; all the court waits for him."

WEISLINGEN. Let them wait on. I shall not go to court.

FRANCIS. Not go to court! My gracious lord, how comes that? If you knew what I know; could you but dream what I have seen——

WEISLINGEN. What ails thee?

FRANCIS. The bare remembrance takes away my senses. Bamberg is no longer Bamberg. An angel of heaven, in semblance of woman, has taken up her abode there, and has made it a paradise.

WEISLINGEN. Is that all?

FRANCIS. May I become a shaven friar, if the first glimpse of her does not drive you frantic!

WEISLINGEN. Who is it, then?

FRANCIS. Adelaide von Walldorf.

WEISLINGEN. Indeed! I have heard much of her beauty.

FRANCIS. Heard! You might as well say I have *seen* music. So far is the tongue from being able to rehearse the slightest particle of her beauty, that the very eye which beholds her cannot drink it all in.

WEISLINGEN. You are mad.

FRANCIS. That may well be. The last time I was in her company I had no more command over my senses than if I had been drunk, or, I may rather say, I felt like a glorified saint enjoying the angelic vision! All my senses exalted, more lively and more perfect than ever, yet not one at its owner's command.

WEISLINGEN. That is strange!

FRANCIS. As I took leave of the bishop, she sat by him; they were playing at chess. He was very gracious; gave me his hand to kiss, and said much, of which I heard not a syllable, for I was looking on his fair antagonist. Her eye was fixed upon the board, as if meditating a bold move.—A touch of subtle watchfulness around the mouth and cheek.—I could have wished to be the ivory king. The mixture of dignity and feeling on her brow—and the dazzling lustre of her face and neck, heightened by her raven tresses——

WEISLINGEN. The theme has made you quite poetical.

FRANCIS. I feel at this moment what constitutes poetic inspiration—a heart altogether wrapt in one idea. As the bishop ended, and I made my obeisance, she looked up and said, "Offer to your master the best wishes of an unknown. Tell him he must come soon. New friends await him; he must not despise them, though he is already so rich in old ones." I would have answered, but the passage betwixt my heart and my tongue was closed, and I only bowed. I would have given all I had for permission to kiss but one of her fingers! As I stood thus, the bishop let fall a pawn, and in stooping to pick it up, I touched the hem of her garment. Transport thrilled through my limbs, and I scarce know how I left the room.

WEISLINGEN. Is her husband at court?

FRANCIS. She has been a widow these four months, and is residing at the court of Bamberg to divert her melancholy. You will see her; and to meet her glance is to bask in the sunshine of spring.

WEISLINGEN. She would not make so strong an impression on me.

FRANCIS. I hear you are as good as married.

WEISLINGEN. Would I were really so! My gentle Maria will be the happiness of my life. The sweetness of her soul beams through her mild blue eyes, and, like an angel of innocence and love, she guides my heart to the paths of peace and felicity! Pack up, and then to my castle. I will not to Bamberg, though St. Bede came in person to fetch me.

[Exit WEISLINGEN.]

FRANCIS (*alone*). Not to Bamberg! Heavens forbid! But let me hope the best. Maria is beautiful and amiable, and a prisoner or an invalid might easily fall in love with her. Her eyes beam with compassion and melancholy sympathy; but in thine, Adelaide, is life, fire, spirit. I would . . . I am a fool; one glance from her has made me so. My master must to Bamberg; and I also, and either recover my senses or gaze them quite away.

ACT II.

SCENE I. *Bamberg. A Hall.*

THE BISHOP and ADELAIDE (*playing at chess*), LIEBTRAUT
(*with a guitar*), LADIES and COURTIERS (*standing in groups*).

LIEBTRAUT (*plays and sings*).

Armed with quiver and bow,
With his torch all a-glow,
Young Cupid comes winging his flight.
Courage glows in his eyes,
As adown from the skies,
He rushes, impatient for fight.

Up! up!

On! on!

Hark! the bright quiver rings!

Hark! the rustle of wings!

All hail to the delicate sprite!

They welcome the urchin;—

Ah, maidens, beware!

He finds every bosom

Unguarded and bare.

In the light of his flambeau

He kindles his darts;—

They fondle and hug him—

And press to their hearts.

ADELAIDE. Your thoughts are not in your game. Check to the king!

BISHOP. There is still a way of escape.

ADELAIDE. You will not be able to hold out long. Check to the king!

LIEBTRAUT. Were I a great prince, I would not play at this game, and would forbid it at court, and throughout the whole land.

ADELAIDE. 'Tis indeed a touchstone of the brain.

LIEBTRAUT. Not on that account. I would rather hear a funeral bell, the cry of the ominous bird, the howling of

that snarling watch-dog, conscience; rather would I hear these through the deepest sleep, than from bishops, knights, and such beasts, the eternal—Check to the king!

BISHOP. Into whose head could such an idea enter?

LIEBTRAUT. A man's, for example, endowed with a weak body and a strong conscience, which, for the most part, indeed, accompany each other. Chess is called a royal game, and is said to have been invented for a king, who rewarded the inventor with a mine of wealth. If this be so, I can picture him to myself. He was a minor, either in understanding or in years, under the guardianship of his mother or his wife; had down upon his chin, and flaxen hair around his temples; was pliant as a willow-shoot, and liked to play at draughts with women, not from passion, God forbid! only for pastime. His tutor, too active for a scholar, too intractable for a man of the world, invented the game, in *usum Delphini*, that was so homogeneous with his majesty—and so on.

ADELAIDE. Checkmate! You should fill up the chasms in our histories, Liebtraut. [*They rise.*]

LIEBTRAUT. To supply those in our family registers would be more profitable. The merits of our ancestors being available for a common object with their portraits, namely, to cover the naked sides of our chambers and of our characters, one might turn such an occupation to good account.

BISHOP. He will not come, you say!

ADELAIDE. I beseech you, banish him from your thoughts.

BISHOP. What can it mean?

LIEBTRAUT. What! The reasons may be told over like the beads of a rosary. He has been seized with a fit of compunction, of which I could soon cure him.

BISHOP. Do so; ride to him instantly.

LIEBTRAUT. My commission—

BISHOP. Shall be unlimited. Spare nothing to bring him back.

LIEBTRAUT. May I venture to use your name, gracious lady?

ADELAIDE. With discretion.

LIEBTRAUT. That's a vague commission.

ADELAIDE. Do you know so little of me, or are you so young as not to understand in what tone you should speak of me to Weislingen?

LIEBTRAUT. In the tone of a fowler's whistle, I think.

ADELAIDE. You will never be reasonable.

LIEBTRAUT. Does one ever become so, gracious lady?

BISHOP. Go! Go! Take the best horse in my stable; choose your servants, and bring him hither.

LIEBTRAUT. If I do not conjure him hither, say that an old woman who charms warts and freckles knows more of sympathy than I.

BISHOP. Yet, what will it avail? Berlichingen has wholly gained him over. He will no sooner be here than he will wish to return.

LIEBTRAUT. He will wish it, doubtless; but can he go? A prince's squeeze of the hand and the smiles of a beauty, from these no Weislingen can tear himself away. I have the honour to take my leave.

BISHOP. A prosperous journey!

ADELAIDE. Adieu! [Exit LIEBTRAUT.]

BISHOP. When he is once here, I must trust to you.

ADELAIDE. Would you make me your lime-twigg?

BISHOP. By no means.

ADELAIDE. Your call-bird then?

BISHOP. No; that is Liebtraut's part. I beseech you do not refuse to do for me what no other can.

ADELAIDE. We shall see. [Exeunt.]

SCENE II. *Jaxthausen. A Hall in Goetz's Castle.*

Enter GOETZ and HANS VON SELBITZ.

SELBITZ. Every one will applaud you for declaring feud against the Nurembergers.

GOETZ. It would have eaten my very heart away had I remained longer their debtor. It is clear that they betrayed my page to the Bambergers. They shall have cause to remember me.

SELBITZ. They have an old grudge against you.

GOETZ. And I against them. I am glad they have begun the fray.

SELBITZ. These free towns have always taken part with the priests.

GOETZ. They have good reason.

SELBITZ. But we will cook their porridge for them!

GOETZ. I reckon upon you. Would that the Burgo-master of Nuremberg, with his gold chain round his neck, fell in our way, we'd astonish him with all his cleverness.

SELBITZ. I hear Weislingen is again on your side. Does he really join in our league?

GOETZ. Not immediately. There are reasons which prevent his openly giving us assistance; but for the present it is quite enough that he is not against us. The priest without him is what the stole would be without the priest!

SELBITZ. When do we set forward?

GOETZ. To-morrow or next day. There are merchants of Bamberg and Nuremberg returning from the fair of Frankfort—We may strike a good blow.

SELBITZ. Let us hope so!

SCENE III. *The Bishop's Palace at Bamberg.*

ADELAIDE and her WAITING-MAID.

ADELAIDE. He is here, sayest thou? I can scarce believe it.

MAID. Had I not seen him myself, I should have doubted it.

ADELAIDE. The bishop should frame Liebraut in gold for such a masterpiece of skill.

MAID. I saw him as he was about to enter the palace. He was mounted on a grey charger. The horse started when he came on the bridge, and would not move forward. The populace thronged up the street to see him. They rejoiced at the delay of the unruly horse. He was greeted on all sides, and he thanked them gracefully all round. He sat the curveting steed with an easy indifference, and by threats and soothing brought him to the gate, followed by Liebraut and a few servants.

ADELAIDE. What do you think of him?

MAID. I never saw a man who pleased me so well. He

is as like that portrait of the emperor, as if he were his son (*pointing to a picture*). His nose is somewhat smaller, but just such gentle light-brown eyes, just such fine light hair, and such a figure! A half melancholy expression on his face, I know not how, but he pleased me so well.

ADELAIDE. I am curious to see him.

MAID. He would be the husband for you!

ADELAIDE. Foolish girl!

MAID. Children and fools——

Enter LIEBTRAUT.

Now, gracious lady, what do I deserve?

ADELAIDE. Horns from your wife!—for judging from the present sample of your persuasive powers, you have certainly endangered the honour of many a worthy family.

LIEBTRAUT. Not so, be assured, gracious lady.

ADELAIDE. How did you contrive to bring him?

LIEBTRAUT. You know how they catch snipes, and why should I detail my little stratagems to you?—First, I pretended to have heard nothing, did not understand the reason of his behaviour, and put him upon the disadvantage of telling me the whole story at length—then I saw the matter in quite a different light to what he did—could not find—could not see, and so forth—then I gossiped things great and small about Bamberg, and recalled to his memory certain old recollections; and when I had succeeded in occupying his imagination, I knitted together many a broken association of ideas. He knew not what to say—felt a new attraction towards Bamberg—he would, and he would not. When I found him begin to waver, and saw him too much occupied with his own feelings to suspect my sincerity, I threw over his head a halter, woven of the three powerful cords, beauty, court-favour, and flattery, and dragged him hither in triumph.

ADELAIDE. What said you of me?

LIEBTRAUT. The simple truth—that you were in perplexity about your estates, and had hoped as he had so much influence with the emperor all would be satisfactorily settled.

ADELAIDE. 'Tis well.

LIEBTRAUT. The bishop will introduce him to you.

ADELAIDE. I expect them. (*Exit LIEBTRAUT.*) And with such feelings have I seldom expected a visitor.

SCENE IV. *The Spessart.*

Enter SELBITZ, GOETZ, and GEORGE in the armour and dress of a trooper.

GOETZ. So, thou didst not find him, George?

GEORGE. He had ridden to Bamberg the day before, with Liebraut and two servants.

GOETZ. I cannot understand what this means.

SELBITZ. I see it well—your reconciliation was almost too speedy to be lasting—Liebraut is a cunning fellow, and has no doubt inveigled him over.

GOETZ. Think'st thou he will become a traitor?

SELBITZ. The first step is taken.

GOETZ. I will never believe it. Who knows what he may have to do at court—his affairs are still unarranged. Let us hope for the best.

SELBITZ. Would to Heaven he may deserve of your good opinion, and may act for the best!

GOETZ. A thought strikes me!—We will disguise George in the spoils of the Bamberg trooper, and furnish him with the password—he may then ride to Bamberg, and see how matters stand.

GEORGE. I have long wished to do so.

GOETZ. It is thy first expedition. Be careful, boy; I should be sorry if ill befell thee.

GEORGE. Never fear. I care not how many of them crawl about me; I think no more of them than of rats and mice.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE V. *The Bishop's Palace. His Cabinet.*

THE BISHOP and WEISLINGEN.

BISHOP. Then thou wilt stay no longer?

WEISLINGEN. You would not have me break my oath.

BISHOP. I could have wished thou hadst not sworn it.—What evil spirit possessed thee?—Could I not have pro-

cured thy release without that? Is my influence so small in the imperial court?

WEISLINGEN. The thing is done;—excuse it as you can.

BISHOP. I cannot see that there was the least necessity for taking such a step—To renounce me?—Were there not a thousand other ways of procuring thy freedom?—Had we not his page? And would I not have given gold enough to boot? and thus satisfied Berlichingen. Our operations against him and his confederates could have gone on . . . But, alas! I do not reflect that I am talking to his friend, who has joined him against me, and can easily counter-work the mines he himself has dug.

WEISLINGEN. My gracious lord—

BISHOP. And yet—when I again look on thy face, again hear thy voice—it is impossible—impossible!

WEISLINGEN. Farewell, good my lord!

BISHOP. I give thee my blessing—formerly when we parted, I was wont to say “Till we meet again!”—Now Heaven grant we meet no more!

WEISLINGEN. Things may alter.

BISHOP. Perhaps I may live to see thee appear as an enemy before my walls, carrying havoc through the fertile plains which now owe their flourishing condition to thee.

WEISLINGEN. Never, my gracious lord!

BISHOP. You cannot say so. My temporal neighbours all have a grudge against me—but while thou wert mine . . . Go, Weislingen!—I have no more to say—Thou hast undone much—Go—

WEISLINGEN. I know not what to answer.

[*Exit* BISHOP.]

Enter FRANCIS.

FRANCIS. The Lady Adelaide expects you. She is not well—but she will not let you depart without bidding her adieu.

WEISLINGEN. Come.

FRANCIS. Do we go then for certain?

WEISLINGEN. This very night.

FRANCIS. I feel as if I were about to leave the world—

WEISLINGEN. I too, and as if besides I knew not whither to go.

SCENE VI. *Adelaide's Apartment.*

ADELAIDE and WAITING-MAID.

MAID. You are pale, gracious lady!

ADELAIDE. I love him not, yet I wish him to stay—for I am fond of his company, though I should dislike him for my husband.

MAID. Does your ladyship think he will go?

ADELAIDE. He is even now bidding the bishop farewell.

MAID. He has yet a severe struggle to undergo.

ADELAIDE. What meanest thou?

MAID. Why do you ask, gracious lady? The barb'd hook is in his heart—ere he tear it away he must bleed to death.

Enter WEISLINGEN.

WEISLINGEN. You are not well, gracious lady?

ADELAIDE. That must be indifferent to you—you leave us, leave us for ever: what matters it to you whether we live or die?

WEISLINGEN. You do me injustice.

ADELAIDE. I judge you as you appear.

WEISLINGEN. Appearances are deceitful.

ADELAIDE. Then you are a chameleon.

WEISLINGEN. Could you but see my heart——

ADELAIDE. I should see fine things there.

WEISLINGEN. Undoubtedly!—You would find your own image——

ADELAIDE. Thrust into some dark corner, with the pictures of defunct ancestors! I beseech you, Weislingen, consider with whom you speak—false words are of value only when they serve to veil our actions—a discovered masquerader plays a pitiful part. You do not disown your deeds, yet your words belie them; what are we to think of you?

WEISLINGEN. What you will—I am so agonised at reflecting on what I am, that I little reck for what I am taken.

ADELAIDE. You came to say farewell.

WEISLINGEN. Permit me to kiss your hand, and I will

say adieu! . . . You remind me—I did not think—but I am troublesome—

ADELAIDE. You misinterpret me. Since you will depart, I only wished to assist your resolution.

WEISLINGEN. O say rather, I must!—were I not compelled by my knightly word—my solemn engagement—

ADELAIDE. Go to! Talk of that to maidens who read the tale of Theuerdanck, and wish that they had such a husband.—Knightly word!—Nonsense!

WEISLINGEN. You do not think so?

ADELAIDE. On my honour, you are dissembling. What have you promised? and to whom? You have pledged your alliance to a traitor to the emperor, at the very moment when he incurred the ban of the empire by taking you prisoner. Such an agreement is no more binding than an extorted, unjust oath. And do not our laws release you from such oaths? Go, tell that to children, who believe in Rübezahl. There is something behind all this.—To become an enemy of the empire—a disturber of public happiness and tranquillity, an enemy of the emperor, the associate of a robber!—Thou, Weislingen, with thy gentle soul!

WEISLINGEN. Did but you know him?

ADELAIDE. I would deal justly with Goetz. He has a lofty indomitable spirit, and woe to thee, therefore, Weislingen. Go, and persuade thyself thou art his companion. Go, and receive his commands. Thou art courteous, gentle—

WEISLINGEN. And he too.

ADELAIDE. But thou art yielding, and he is stubborn. Imperceptibly will he draw thee on. Thou wilt become the slave of a baron; thou that mightest command princes!—Yet it is cruel to make you discontented with your future position.

WEISLINGEN. Did you but know what kindness he showed me.

ADELAIDE. Kindness!—Do you make such a merit of that? It was his duty. And what would you have lost had he acted otherwise? I would rather he had done so. An overbearing man like—

WEISLINGEN. You speak of your enemy.

ADELAIDE. I speak for your freedom; yet I know not why I should take so much interest in it. Farewell!

WEISLINGEN. Permit me, but a moment. [*Takes her hand. A pause.*]

ADELAIDE. Have you aught to say?

WEISLINGEN. I must hence.

ADELAIDE. Then go.

WEISLINGEN. Gracious lady, I cannot.

ADELAIDE. You must.

WEISLINGEN. And is this your parting look?

ADELAIDE. Go, I am unwell, very inopportunistly.

WEISLINGEN. Look not on me thus!

ADELAIDE. Wilt thou be our enemy, and yet have us smile upon thee—go!

WEISLINGEN. Adelaide!

ADELAIDE. I hate thee!

Enter FRANCIS.

FRANCIS. Noble sir, the bishop enquires for you.

ADELAIDE. Go! go!

FRANCIS. He begs you to come instantly.

ADELAIDE. Go! go!

WEISLINGEN. I do not say adieu: I shall see you again

[*Exit WEISLINGEN and FRANCIS*]

ADELAIDE. Thou wilt see me again? We must provide for that. Margaret, when he comes, refuse him admittance. Say I am ill, have a headache, am asleep, anything. If this does not detain him, nothing will.

[*Exit.*]

SCENE VII. *An ante-room.*

WEISLINGEN and FRANCIS.

WEISLINGEN. She will not see me!

FRANCIS. Night draws on; shall we saddle?

WEISLINGEN. She will not see me!

FRANCIS. Shall I order the horses?

WEISLINGEN. It is too late; we stay here.

FRANCIS. God be praised!

[*Exit*]

WEISLINGEN (*alone*). Thou stayest! Be on thy guard—the temptation is great. My horse started at the castle

gate. My good angel stood before him, he knew the danger that awaited me. Yet it would be wrong to leave in confusion the various affairs entrusted to me by the bishop, without at least so arranging them, that my successor may be able to continue where I left off. That I can do without breach of faith to Berlichingen, and when it is done no one shall detain me. Yet it would have been better that I had never come. But I will away—to-morrow—or next day :—'Tis decided! [*Exit.*]

SCENE VIII. *The Spessart.*

Enter GOETZ, SELBITZ, and GEORGE.

SELBITZ. You see it has turned out as I prophesied.

GOETZ. No, no, no.

GEORGE. I tell you the truth, believe me. I did as you commanded, took the dress and pass-word of the Bamberg trooper, and escorted some peasants of the Lower Rhine, who paid my expenses for my convoy.

SELBITZ. In that disguise? It might have cost thee dear.

GEORGE. So I begin to think, now that it's over. A trooper who thinks of danger beforehand, will never do anything great. I got safely to Bamberg, and in the very first inn I heard them tell how the bishop and Weislingen were reconciled, and how Weislingen was to marry the widow of Von Walldorf.

GOETZ. Mere gossip!

GEORGE. I saw him as he led her to table. She is lovely, by my faith, most lovely! We all bowed—she thanked us all. He nodded, and seemed highly pleased. They passed on, and everybody murmured, "What a handsome pair!"

GOETZ. That may be.

GEORGE. Listen further. The next day as he went to mass, I watched my opportunity; he was attended only by his squire; I stood at the steps, and whispered to him as he passed, "A few words from your friend Berlichingen." He started—I marked the confession of guilt in

his face. He had scarcely the heart to look at me—me, a poor trooper's boy!

SELBITZ. His evil conscience degrades him more than thy condition does thee.

GEORGE. "Art thou of Bamberg?" said he. "The Knight of Berlichingen greets you," said I, "and I am to enquire—" "Come to my apartment to-morrow morning," quoth he, "and we will speak further."

GOETZ. And you went?

GEORGE. Yes, certainly, I went, and waited in his ante-chamber a long—long time—and his pages, in their silken doublets, stared at me from head to foot. Stare on, thought I. At length I was admitted. He seemed angry. But what cared I? I gave my message. He began blustering like a coward who wants to look brave. He wondered that you should take him to task through a trooper's boy. That angered me. "There are but two sorts of people," said I, "true men and scoundrels, and I serve Goetz of Berlichingen." Then he began to talk all manner of nonsense, which all tended to one point, namely, that you had hurried him into an agreement, that he owed you no allegiance, and would have nothing to do with you.

GOETZ. Hadst thou that from his own mouth?

GEORGE. That, and yet more. He threatened me—

GOETZ. It is enough. He is lost for ever. Faith and confidence, again have ye deceived me. Poor Maria! how am I to break this to you?

SELBITZ. I would rather lose my other leg than be such a rascal.

SCENE IX. *Hall in the Bishop's Palace at Bamberg.*

ADELAIDE and WEISLINGEN *discovered.*

ADELAIDE. Time begins to hang insupportably heavy here. I dare not speak seriously, and I am ashamed to trifle with you. Ennui, thou art worse than a slow fever.

WEISLINGEN. Are you tired of me already?

ADELAIDE. Not so much of you as of your society. I would you had gone when you wished, and that we had not detained you.

WEISLINGEN. Such is woman's favour! At first she fosters with maternal warmth our dearest hopes; and then, like an inconstant hen, she forsakes the nest, and abandons the infant brood to death and decay.

ADELAIDE. Yes, you may rail at women. The reckless gambler tears and curses the harmless cards which have been the instruments of his loss. But let me tell you something about *men*. What are you that talk about fickleness? You that are seldom even what you would wish to be, never what you should be. Princes in holiday garb! the envy of the vulgar. O what would a tailor's wife not give for a necklace of the pearls on the skirt of your robe, which you kick back contemptuously with your heels.

WEISLINGEN. You are severe.

ADELAIDE. It is but the antistrophe to your song. Ere I knew you, Weislingen, I felt like the tailor's wife. Hundred-tongued rumour, to speak without metaphor, had so extolled you, in quack-doctor fashion, that I was tempted to wish—O that I could but see this quintessence of manhood, this phoenix, Weislingen! My wish was granted.

WEISLINGEN. And the phoenix turned out a dunghill cock.

ADELAIDE. No, Weislingen, I took an interest in you.

WEISLINGEN. So it appeared.

ADELAIDE. So it *was*—for you really surpassed your reputation. The multitude prize only the reflection of worth. For my part, I do not care to scrutinize the character of those whom I esteem; so we lived on for some time. I felt there was a deficiency in you, but knew not what I missed; at length my eyes were opened—I saw instead of the energetic being who gave impulse to the affairs of a kingdom, and was ever alive to the voice of fame—who was wont to pile princely project on project, till, like the mountains of the Titans, they reached the clouds—instead of all this, I saw a man as querulous as a love-sick poet, as melancholy as a slighted damsel, and more indolent than an old bachelor. I first ascribed it to your misfortune which still lay at your heart, and excused you as well as I could; but now that it daily becomes worse,

you must really forgive me if I withdraw my favour from you. You possess it unjustly: I bestowed it for life on a hero who cannot transfer it to you.

WEISLINGEN. Dismiss me, then.

ADELAIDE. Not till all chance of recovery is lost. Solitude is fatal in your distemper. Alas! poor man! you are as dejected as one whose first love has proved false, and therefore I won't give you up. Give me your hand, and pardon what affection has urged me to say.

WEISLINGEN. Couldst thou but love me, couldst thou but return the fervour of my passion with the least glow of sympathy.—Adelaide, thy reproaches are most unjust. Couldst thou but guess the hundredth part of my sufferings, thou wouldst not have tortured me so unmercifully with encouragement, indifference, and contempt. You smile. To be reconciled to myself after the step I have taken must be the work of more than one day. How can I plot against the man who has been so recently and so vividly restored to my affection?

ADELAIDE. Strange being! Can you love him whom you envy? It is like sending provisions to an enemy.

WEISLINGEN. I well know that here there must be no dallying. He is aware that I am again Weislingen; and he will watch his advantage over us. Besides, Adelaide, we are not so sluggish as you think. Our troopers are reinforced and watchful, our schemes are proceeding, and the Diet of Augsburg will, I hope, soon bring them to a favourable issue.

ADELAIDE. You go there?

WEISLINGEN. If I could carry a glimpse of hope with me.

[Kisses her hand.]

ADELAIDE. Oh! ye infidels! Always signs and wonders required. Go, Weislingen, and accomplish the work! The interest of the bishop, yours, and mine, are all so linked together, that were it only for policy's sake——

WEISLINGEN. You jest.

ADELAIDE. I do not jest. The haughty duke has seized my property. Goetz will not be slow to ravage yours; and if we do not hold together, as our enemies do, and gain over the emperor to our side, we are lost.

WEISLINGEN. I fear nothing. Most of the princes

think with us. The emperor needs assistance against the Turks, and it is therefore just that he should help us in his turn. What rapture for me to rescue your fortune from rapacious enemies; to crush the mutinous chivalry of Swabia; to restore peace to the bishopric, and then——

ADELAIDE. One day brings on another, and fate is mistress of the future.

WEISLINGEN. But we must lend our endeavours.

ADELAIDE. We do so.

WEISLINGEN. But seriously.

ADELAIDE. Well, then, seriously. Do but go——

WEISLINGEN. Enchantress! [Exeunt.]

SCENE X. *An Inn.*

The Bridal of a PEASANT.

The BRIDE'S FATHER, BRIDE, BRIDEGROOM, and other Country-folks, GOETZ OF BERLICHINGEN, and HANS OF SELRITZ all discovered at table. TROOPERS and PEASANTS attend.

GOETZ. It was the best way thus to settle your lawsuit by a merry bridal.

BRIDE'S FATHER. Better than ever I could have dreamed of, noble sir—to spend my days in quiet with my neighbour, and have a daughter provided for to boot.

BRIDEGROOM. And I to get the bone of contention and a pretty wife into the bargain! Ay, the prettiest in the whole village. Would to Heaven you had consented sooner.

GOETZ. How long have you been at law?

BRIDE'S FATHER. About eight years. I would rather have the fever for twice that time, than go through with it again from the beginning. For these periwigged gentry never give a decision till you tear it out of their very hearts; and after all, what do you get for your pains? The devil fly away with the assessor Sapupi for a damned swarthy Italian!

BRIDEGROOM. Yes, he's a pretty fellow; I was before him twice.

BRIDE'S FATHER. And I thrice; and look ye, gentlemen, we got a judgment at last, which set forth that he was as much in the right as I, and I as much as he; so there we stood like a couple of fools, till a good Providence put it into my head to give him my daughter, and the ground besides.

GOETZ (*drinks*). To your better understanding for the future.

BRIDE'S FATHER. With all my heart! But come what may, I'll never go to law again as long as I live. What a mint of money it costs! For every bow made to you by a procurator, you must come down with your dollars.

SELBITZ. But there are annual imperial visitations.

BRIDE'S FATHER. I have never heard of them. Many an extra dollar have they contrived to squeeze out of me. The expenses are horrible.

GOETZ. How mean you?

BRIDE'S FATHER. Why, look you, these gentlemen of the law are always holding out their hands. The assessor alone, God forgive him, eased me of eighteen golden guilders.

BRIDEGROOM. Who?

BRIDE'S FATHER. Why, who else but Sapupi?

GOETZ. That is infamous.

BRIDE'S FATHER. Yes, he asked twenty; and there I had to pay them in the great hall of his fine country-house. I thought my heart would burst with anguish. For look you, my lord, I am well enough off with my house and little farm, but how could I raise the ready cash? I stood there, God knows how it was with me. I had not a single farthing to carry me on my journey. At last I took courage and told him my case: when he saw I was desperate, he flung me back a couple of guilders, and sent me about my business.

BRIDEGROOM. Impossible! Sapupi?

BRIDE'S FATHER. Ay, he himself!—What do you stare at?

BRIDEGROOM. Devil take the rascal! He took fifteen guilders from me too!

BRIDE'S FATHER. The deuce he did!

SELBITZ. They call us robbers, Goetz!

BRIDE'S FATHER. Bribed on both sides! That's why the judgment fell out so queer.—Oh! the scoundrel!

GOETZ. You must not let this pass unnoticed.

BRIDE'S FATHER. What can we do?

GOETZ. Why—go to Spire where there is an imperial visitation: make your complaint; they must enquire into it, and help you to your own again.

BRIDEGROOM. Does your honour think we shall succeed?

GOETZ. If I might take him in hand, I could promise it you.

SELBITZ. The sum is worth an attempt.

GOETZ. Ay; many a day have I ridden out for the fourth part of it.

BRIDE'S FATHER (*to BRIDEGROOM*). What think'st thou?

BRIDEGROOM. We'll try, come what may.

Enter GEORGE.

GEORGE. The Nurembergers have set out.

GOETZ. Whereabouts are they?

GEORGE. If we ride off quietly, we shall just catch them in the wood betwixt Berheim and Mühlbach.

SELBITZ. Excellent!

GOETZ. Well, my children, God bless you, and help every man to his own!

BRIDE'S FATHER. Thanks, gallant sir! Will you not stay to supper?

GOETZ. I cannot. Adieu!

[*Exeunt GOETZ, SELBITZ, and TROOPERS.*]

ACT III.

SCENE I. *A Garden at Augsburg.*

Enter two MERCHANTS of Nuremberg.

FIRST MERCHANT. We'll stand here, for the emperor must pass this way. He is just coming up the long avenue.

SECOND MERCHANT. Who is that with him?

FIRST MERCHANT. Adelbert of Weislingen.

SECOND MERCHANT. The bishop's friend. That's lucky!

FIRST MERCHANT. We'll throw ourselves at his feet.

SECOND MERCHANT. See! they come.

Enter the EMPEROR and WEISLINGEN.

FIRST MERCHANT. He looks displeased.

EMPEROR. I am disheartened, Weislingen. When I review my past life, I am ready to despair. So many half—ay, and wholly ruined undertakings—and all because the pettiest feudatory of the empire thinks more of gratifying his own whims than of seconding my endeavours.

[The MERCHANTS throw themselves at his feet]

FIRST MERCHANT. Most mighty! Most gracious!

EMPEROR. Who are ye? What seek ye?

FIRST MERCHANT. Poor merchants of Nuremberg, your majesty's devoted servants, who implore your aid. Goetz von Berlichingen and Hans von Selbitz fell upon thirty of us as we journeyed from the fair of Frankfort, under an escort from Bamberg; they overpowered and plundered us. We implore your imperial assistance to obtain redress, else we are all ruined men, and shall be compelled to beg our bread.

EMPEROR. Good heavens! What is this? The one has but one hand, the other but one leg; if they both had two hands and two legs what would you do then?

FIRST MERCHANT. We most humbly beseech your majesty to cast a look of compassion upon our unfortunate condition.

EMPEROR. How is this?—If a merchant loses a bag of pepper, all Germany is to rise in arms; but when business is to be done, in which the imperial majesty and the empire are interested, should it concern dukedoms, principalities, or kingdoms, there is no bringing you together.

WEISLINGEN. You come at an unseasonable time. Go, and stay at Augsburg for a few days.

MERCHANTS. We make our most humble obeisance.

[Exeunt MERCHANTS.]

EMPEROR. Again new disturbances; they multiply like the hydra's heads!

WEISLINGEN. And can only be extirpated with fire and sword.

EMPEROR. Do you think so?

WEISLINGEN. Nothing seems to me more advisable, could your majesty and the princes but accommodate your other unimportant disputes. It is not the body of the state that complains of this malady—Franconia and Swabia alone glow with the embers of civil discord; and even there many of the nobles and free barons long for quiet. Could we but crush Sickingen, Selbitz—and—and Berlichingen, the others would fall asunder; for it is the spirit of these knights which quickens the turbulent multitude.

EMPEROR. Fain would I spare them; they are noble and hardy. Should I be engaged in war, they would follow me to the field.

WEISLINGEN. It is to be wished they had at all times known their duty; moreover it would be dangerous to reward their mutinous bravery by offices of trust. For it is exactly this imperial mercy and forgiveness which they have hitherto so grievously abused, and upon which the hope and confidence of their league rests, and this spirit cannot be quelled till we have wholly destroyed their power in the eyes of the world, and taken from them all hope of ever recovering their lost influence.

EMPEROR. You advise severe measures, then?

WEISLINGEN. I see no other means of quelling the spirit of insurrection which has seized upon whole provinces. Do we not already hear the bitterest complaints from the nobles, that their vassals and serfs rebel against them, question their authority, and threaten to curtail their hereditary prerogatives? A proceeding which would involve the most fearful consequences.

EMPEROR. This were a fair occasion for proceeding against Berlichingen and Selbitz; but I will not have them personally injured. Could they be taken prisoners, they should swear to renounce their feuds, and to remain in their own castles and territories upon their knightly parole. At the next session of the Diet we will propose this plan.

WEISLINGEN. A general exclamation of joyful assent will spare your majesty the trouble of particular detail.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II. *Jaarhausen.*

Enter GOETZ and FRANZ VON SICKINGEN.

SICKINGEN. Yes, my friend, I come to beg the heart and hand of your noble sister.

GOETZ. I would you had come sooner. Weislingen, during his imprisonment, obtained her affections, proposed for her, and I gave my consent. I let the bird loose, and he now despises the benevolent hand that fed him in his distress. He flutters about to seek his food, God knows upon what hedge.

SICKINGEN. Is this so?

GOETZ. Even as I tell you.

SICKINGEN. He has broken a double bond. 'Tis well for you that you were not more closely allied with the traitor.

GOETZ. The poor maiden passes her life in lamentation and prayer.

SICKINGEN. I will comfort her.

GOETZ. What! Could you make up your mind to marry a forsaken?—

SICKINGEN. It is to the honour of you both, to have been deceived by him. Should the poor girl be caged in a cloister because the first man who gained her love proved a villain? Not so; I insist on it. She shall be mistress of my castles!

GOETZ. I tell you he was not indifferent to her.

SICKINGEN. Do you think I cannot efface the recollection of such a wretch? Let us go to her. *[Exeunt.]*

SCENE III. *The Camp of the Party sent to execute the Imperial Mandate.*

Imperial CAPTAIN and OFFICERS discovered.

CAPTAIN. We must be cautious, and spare our people as much as possible. Besides, we have strict orders to overpower and take him alive. It will be difficult to obey; for who will engage with him hand to hand?

FIRST OFFICER. 'Tis true. And he will fight like

wild boar. Besides, he has never in his whole life injured any of us, so each will be glad to leave to the other the honour of risking life and limb to please the emperor.

SECOND OFFICER. 'Twere shame to us should we not take him. Had I him once by the ears, he should not easily escape.

FIRST OFFICER. Don't seize him with your teeth, however, he might chance to run away with your jaw-bone. My good young sir, such men are not taken like a run-away thief.

SECOND OFFICER. We shall see.

CAPTAIN. By this time he must have had our summons. We must not delay. I mean to dispatch a troop to watch his motions.

SECOND OFFICER. Let me lead it.

CAPTAIN. You are unacquainted with the country.

SECOND OFFICER. I have a servant who was born and bred here.

CAPTAIN. That will do.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE IV. *Jaxthausen.*

SICKINGEN (*alone*).

All goes as I wish! She was somewhat startled at my proposal, and looked at me from head to foot; I'll wager she was comparing me with her gallant. Thank Heaven I can stand the scrutiny! She answered little and confusedly. So much the better! Let it work for a time. A proposal of marriage does not come amiss after such a cruel disappointment.

Enter GOETZ.

SICKINGEN. What news, brother?

GOETZ. They have laid me under the ban.

SICKINGEN. How?

GOETZ. There, read the edifying epistle. The emperor has issued an edict against me, which gives my body for food to the beasts of the earth and the fowls of the air.

SICKINGEN. They shall first furnish them with a dinner themselves. I am here in the very nick of time.

GOETZ. No, Sickingen, you must leave me. Your great undertakings might be ruined, should you become the enemy of the emperor at so unseasonable a time. Besides, you can be of more use to me by remaining neutral. The worst that can happen is my being made prisoner; and then your good word with the emperor, who esteems you, may rescue me from the misfortune into which your untimely assistance would irremediably plunge us both. To what purpose should you do otherwise? These troops are marching against me; and if they knew we were united, their numbers would only be increased, and our position would consequently be no better. The emperor is at the fountain-head; and I should be utterly ruined were it as easy to inspire soldiers with courage as to collect them into a body.

SICKINGEN. But I can privately reinforce you with a score of troopers.

GOETZ. Good. I have already sent George to Selbitz, and to my people in the neighbourhood. My dear brother, when my forces are collected, they will be such a troop as few princes can bring together.

SICKINGEN. It will be small against the multitude.

GOETZ. One wolf is too many for a whole flock of sheep.

SICKINGEN. But if they have a good shepherd?

GOETZ. Never fear! They are all hirelings; and then even the best knight can do but little if he cannot act as he pleases. It happened once, that to oblige the Palsgrave, I went to serve against Conrad Schotten; they then presented me with a paper of instructions from the chancery, which set forth—Thus and thus must you proceed. I threw down the paper before the magistrates, and told them I could not act according to it; that something might happen unprovided for in my instructions, and that I must use my own eyes and judge what was best to be done.

SICKINGEN. Good luck, brother! I will hence, and send thee what men I can collect in haste.

GOETZ. Come first to the women. I left them together.

I would you had her consent before you depart! Then send me the troopers, and come back in private to carry away my Maria; for my castle, I fear, will shortly be no abode for women.

SICKINGEN. We will hope for the best. [Exit.

SCENE V. Bamberg. Adelaide's Chamber.

ADELAIDE and FRANCIS.

ADELAIDE. They have already set out to enforce the ban against both?

FRANCIS. Yes; and my master has the happiness of marching against your enemies. I would gladly have gone also, however rejoiced I always am at being dispatched to you. But I will away instantly, and soon return with good news; my master has allowed me to do so.

ADELAIDE. How is he?

FRANCIS. He is well, and commanded me to kiss your hand.

ADELAIDE. There!—Thy lips glow.

FRANCIS (*aside, pressing his breast*). Here glows something yet more fiery. (*Aloud*) Gracious lady, your servants are the most fortunate of beings!

ADELAIDE. Who goes against Berlichingen?

FRANCIS. The Baron von Sirau. Farewell! Dearest, most gracious lady, I must away. Forget me not!

ADELAIDE. Thou must first take some rest and refreshment.

FRANCIS. I need none, for I have seen you! I am neither weary nor hungry.

ADELAIDE. I know thy fidelity.

FRANCIS. Ah, gracious lady!

ADELAIDE. You can never hold out; you *must* repose and refresh yourself.

FRANCIS. You are too kind to a poor youth. [Exit.

ADELAIDE. The tears stood in his eyes. I love him from my heart. Never did man attach himself to me with such warmth of affection. [Exit.

SCENE VI. *Jaxthausen.*

GOETZ and GEORGE.

GEORGE. He wants to speak with you in person. I do not know him—he is a tall, well-made man, with keen dark eyes.

GOETZ. Admit him.

[*Exit* GEORGE]

Enter LERSE.

GOETZ. God save you! What bring you?

LERSE. Myself: not much, but such as it is, it is at your service.

GOETZ. You are welcome, doubly welcome! A brave man, and at a time when, far from expecting new friends, I was in hourly fear of losing the old. Your name?

LERSE. Franz Lerse.

GOETZ. I thank you, Franz, for making me acquainted with a brave man!

LERSE. I made you acquainted with me once before, but then you did not thank me for my pains.

GOETZ. I have no recollection of you.

LERSE. I should be sorry if you had. Do you recollect when, to please the Palsgrave, you rode against Conrad Schotten, and went through Hassfurt on an Allhallows eve?

GOETZ. I remember it well.

LERSE. And twenty-five troopers encountered you in a village by the way?

GOETZ. Exactly. I at first took them for only twelve. I divided my party, which amounted but to sixteen, and halted in the village behind the barn, intending to let them ride by. Then I thought of falling upon them in the rear, as I had concerted with the other troop.

LERSE. We saw you, however, and stationed ourselves on a height above the village. You drew up beneath the hill and halted. When we perceived that you did not intend to come up to us we rode down to you.

GOETZ. And then I saw for the first time that I had thrust my hand into the fire. Five-and-twenty against eight is no jesting business. Everard Truchsess killed

one of my followers, for which I knocked him off his horse. Had they all behaved like him and one other trooper, it would have been all over with me and my little band.

LERSE. And that trooper—

GOETZ. Was as gallant a fellow as I ever saw. He attacked me fiercely; and when I thought I had given him enough and was engaged elsewhere, he was upon me again, and laid on like a fury: he cut quite through my armour, and wounded me in the arm.

LERSE. Have you forgiven him?

GOETZ. He pleased me only too well.

LERSE. I hope then you have cause to be contented with me, since the proof of my valour was on your own person.

GOETZ. Art thou he? O welcome! welcome! Canst thou boast, Maximilian, that amongst thy followers, thou hast gained one after this fashion?

LERSE. I wonder you did not sooner hit upon me.

GOETZ. How could I think that the man would engage in my service who did his best to overpower me?

LERSE. Even so, my lord. From my youth upwards I have served as a trooper, and have had a tussle with many a knight. I was overjoyed when we met you; for I had heard of your prowess, and wished to know you. You saw I gave way, and that it was not from cowardice, for I returned to the charge. In short, I learnt to know you, and from that hour I resolved to enter your service.

GOETZ. How long wilt thou engage with me?

LERSE. For a year, without pay.

GOETZ. No; thou shalt have as the others; nay more, as befits him who gave me so much work at Remlin.

Enter GEORGE.

GEORGE. Hans of Selbitz greets you. To-morrow he will be here with fifty men.

GOETZ. 'Tis well,

GEORGE. There is a troop of Imperialists riding down the hill, doubtless to reconnoitre.

GOETZ. How many?

GEORGE. About fifty.

GOETZ. Only fifty! Come, Lerse, we'll have a slash at them, so that when Selbitz comes he may find some work done to his hand.

LERSE. 'Twill be capital practice

GOETZ. To horse!

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE VII. *A Wood, on the borders of a Morass.*

Two IMPERIALIST TROOPERS meeting.

FIRST IMPERIALIST. What dost thou here?

SECOND IMPERIALIST. I have leave of absence for ten minutes. Ever since our quarters were beat up last night, I have had such violent attacks that I can't sit on horse-back for two minutes together.

FIRST IMPERIALIST. Is the party far advanced?

SECOND IMPERIALIST. About three miles into the wood.

FIRST IMPERIALIST. Then why are you playing truant here?

SECOND IMPERIALIST. Prithee, betray me not. I am going to the next village to see if I cannot get some warm bandages, to relieve my complaint. But whence comest thou?

FIRST IMPERIALIST. I am bringing our officer some wine and meat from the nearest village.

SECOND IMPERIALIST. So, so! he stuffs himself under our very noses, and we must starve—A fine example!

FIRST IMPERIALIST. Come back with me, rascal.

SECOND IMPERIALIST. Call me a fool, if I do! There are plenty in our troop who would gladly fast, to be as far away as I am.

[*Trampling of horses heard.*]

FIRST IMPERIALIST. Hear'st thou?—Horses!

SECOND IMPERIALIST. Oh dear! Oh dear!

FIRST IMPERIALIST. I'll get up into this tree.

SECOND IMPERIALIST. And I'll hide among the rushes.

[*They hide themselves.*]

Enter on horseback, GOETZ, LERSE, GEORGE, and TROOPERS, all completely armed.

GOETZ. Away into the wood, by the ditch on the left,—then we have them in the rear.

[*They gallop off.*]

FIRST IMPERIALIST (*descending*). This is a bad business—Michael!—He answers not—Michael, they are gone! (*Goes towards the marsh.*) Alas, he is sunk!—Michael!—He hears me not: he is suffocated.—Poor coward, art thou done for—We are slain—Enemies! Enemies on all sides!

Re-enter GOETZ and GEORGE on horseback.

GOETZ. Yield thee, fellow, or thou diest!

IMPERIALIST. Spare my life!

GOETZ. Thy sword!—George, lead him to the other prisoners, whom Lerse is guarding yonder in the wood—I must pursue their fugitive leader. [*Exit.*]

IMPERIALIST. What has become of the knight, our officer?

GEORGE. My master struck him head over heels from his horse, so that his plume stuck in the mire. His troopers got him up and off they were as if the devil were behind them. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE VIII. *Camp of the Imperialists.*

CAPTAIN and FIRST OFFICER.

FIRST OFFICER. They fly from afar towards the camp.

CAPTAIN. He is most likely hard at their heels—Draw out fifty as far as the mill; if he follows up the pursuit too far you may perhaps entrap him. [*Exit OFFICER.*]

The SECOND OFFICER is borne in.

CAPTAIN. How now, my young sir—have you got a cracked headpiece?

OFFICER. A plague upon you! The stoutest helmet went to shivers like glass. The demon!—he ran upon me as if he would strike me into the earth!

CAPTAIN. Thank God that you have escaped with your life.

OFFICER. There is little left to be thankful for; two of my ribs are broken—where's the surgeon?

[*He is carried off.*]

SCENE IX. *Jaxthausen.**Enter GOETZ and SELBITZ.*

GOETZ. And what say you to the ban, Selbitz?

SELBITZ. 'Tis a trick of Weislingen's.

GOETZ. Do you think so?

SELBITZ. I do not think—I know it.

GOETZ. How so?

SELBITZ. He was at the Diet, I tell thee, and near the emperor's person.

GOETZ. Well then, we shall frustrate another of his schemes.

SELBITZ. I hope so.

GOETZ. We will away! and course these hares.

SCENE X. *The Imperial Camp.*

CAPTAIN, OFFICERS, and FOLLOWERS.

CAPTAIN. We shall gain nothing at this work, sirs! He beats one troop after another; and whoever escapes death or captivity, would rather fly to Turkey than return to the camp. Thus our force diminishes daily. We must attack him once for all, and in earnest—I will go myself, and he shall find with whom he has to deal.

OFFICER. We are all content; but he is so well acquainted with the country, and knows every path and ravine so thoroughly, that he will be as difficult to find as a rat in a barn.

CAPTAIN. I warrant you we'll ferret him out. On towards Jaxthausen! Whether he like it or not, he must come to defend his castle.

OFFICER. Shall our whole force march?

CAPTAIN. Yes, certainly—do you know that a hundred of us are melted away already?

OFFICER. Then let us away with speed, before the whole snow-ball dissolves; for this is warm work, and we stand here like butter in the sunshine.

[Exeunt—A march sounded]

SCENE XI. *Mountains and a Wood.*

GOETZ, SELBITZ, and TROOPERS.

GOETZ. They are coming in full force. It was high time that Sickingen's troopers joined us.

SELBITZ. We will divide our party—I will take the left hand by the hill.

GOETZ. Good—and do thou, Lerse, lead fifty men straight through the wood on the right. They are coming across the heath—I will draw up opposite to them. George, stay by me—when you see them attack me, then fall upon their flank: we'll beat the knaves into a mummy—they little think we can face them. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE XII. *A Heath—on one side an Eminence, with a ruined Tower, on the other the Forest.*

Enter marching, the CAPTAIN OF THE IMPERIALISTS *with OFFICERS and his SQUADRON—Drums and standards.*

CAPTAIN. He halts upon the heath! that's too impudent. He shall smart for it—what! not fear the torrent that threatens to overwhelm him!

OFFICER. I had rather you did not head the troops; he looks as if he meant to plant the first that comes upon him in the mire with his head downmost. Pritheeride in the rear.

CAPTAIN. Not so.

OFFICER. I entreat you. You are the knot which unites this bundle of hazel-twigs; loose it, and he will break them separately like so many reeds.

CAPTAIN. Sound, trumpeter—and let us blow him to hell!

[*A charge sounded—Exeunt in full career.*]

SELBITZ, *with his TROOPERS, comes from behind the hill, galloping.*

SELBITZ. Follow me! They shall wish that they could multiply their hands.

[*They gallop across the stage, et exeunt.*]

Loud alarm—LERSE and his party sally from the wood.

LERSE. Ho! to the rescue! Goetz is almost surrounded.
—Gallant Selbitz, thou hast cut thy way—we will sow
the heath with these thistle heads. *[Gallop off.]*

A loud alarm, with shouting and firing for some minutes.

SELBITZ is borne in wounded by two TROOPERS.

SELBITZ. Leave me here, and hasten to Goetz.

FIRST TROOPER. Let us stay, sir—you need our aid.

SELBITZ. Get one of you on the watch-tower, and tell
me how it goes.

FIRST TROOPER. How shall I get up?

SECOND TROOPER. Mount upon my shoulders—you can
then reach the ruined part, and thence scramble up to the
opening. *[FIRST TROOPER gets up into the tower.]*

FIRST TROOPER. Alas, sir!

SELBITZ. What seest thou?

FIRST TROOPER. Your troopers fly towards the hill.

SELBITZ. Rascally cowards;—I would that they stood
their ground, and I had a ball through my head;—Ride,
one of you, full speed—Curse and thunder them back to
the field—Seest thou Goetz? *[Exit SECOND TROOPER.]*

TROOPER. I see his three black feathers floating in the
midst of the wavy tumult.

SELBITZ. Swim, brave swimmer—I lie here.

TROOPER. A white plume—whose is that?

SELBITZ. The captain's.

TROOPER. Goetz gallops upon him—crash! Down he goes!

SELBITZ. The captain?

TROOPER. Yes, sir.

SELBITZ. Hurrah! hurrah!

TROOPER. Alas! alas! I see Goetz no more.

SELBITZ. Then die, Selbitz!

TROOPER. A dreadful tumult where he stood—George's
blue plume vanishes too.

SELBITZ. Come down! Dost thou not see Lerse?

TROOPER. No;—Everything is in confusion.

SELBITZ. No more. Come down.—How do Sickingen's
men bear themselves?

TROOPER. Well;—One of them flies to the wood—
another—another—a whole troop. Goetz is lost!

SELBITZ. Come down.

TROOPER. I cannot—Hurrah! hurrah! I see Goetz, I see George.

SELBITZ. On horseback?

TROOPER. Ay, ay, high on horseback—Victory! victory!—they fly.

SELBITZ. The Imperialists?

TROOPER. Yes, standard and all, Goetz behind them. They disperse,—Goetz reaches the ensign—he seizes the standard; he halts. A handful of men rally round him—My comrade reaches him—they come this way.

Enter GOETZ, GEORGE, LERSE, and TROOPERS, on horseback.

SELBITZ. Joy to thee, Goetz!—Victory! victory!

GOETZ (*dismounting*). Dearly, dearly bought. Thou art wounded, Selbitz!

SELBITZ. But thou dost live and hast conquered! I have done little; and my dogs of troopers! How hast thou come off?

GOETZ. For the present, well! And here I thank George, and thee, Lerse, for my life. I unhorsed the captain, they stabbed my horse, and pressed me hard. George cut his way to me, and sprang off his horse. I threw myself like lightning upon it, and he appeared suddenly like a thunderbolt upon another. How camest thou by thy steed?

GEORGE. A fellow struck at you from behind: as he raised his cuirass in the act, I stabbed him with my dagger. Down he came; and so I rid you of an enemy, and helped myself to a horse.

GOETZ. There we held together till Francis here came to our help; and thereupon we mowed our way out.

LERSE. The hounds whom I led were to have mowed their way in, till our scythes met, but they fled like Imperialists.

GOETZ. Friend and foe all fled, except this little band who protected my rear. I had enough to do with the fellows in front, but the fall of their captain dismayed them: they wavered, and fled. I have their banner, and a few prisoners.

SELBITZ. The captain has escaped you?

GOETZ. They rescued him in the scuffle. Come, lads, come, Selbitz.—Make a litter of lances and boughs: Thou canst not mount a horse, come to my castle. They are scattered, but we are very few; and I know not what crops they may have in reserve. I will be your host, my friends. Wine will taste well after such an action.

[*Exeunt, carrying SELBITZ.*]

SCENE XIII. *The Camp.*

The CAPTAIN and IMPERIALISTS.

CAPTAIN. I could kill you all with my own hand.—What! to turn tail! He had not a handful of men left. To give way before one man! No one will believe it but those who wish to make a jest of us. Ride round the country, you, and you, and you: collect our scattered soldiers, or cut them down wherever you find them. We must grind these notches out of our blades, even should we spoil our swords in the operation.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE XIV. *Jaxthausen.*

GOETZ, LERSE, and GEORGE.

GOETZ. We must not lose a moment. My poor fellows, I dare allow you no rest. Gallop round and strive to enlist troopers, appoint them to assemble at Weilern, where they will be most secure. Should we delay a moment, they will be before the castle.—(*Exeunt LERSE and GEORGE*)—I must send out a scout. This begins to grow warm.—If we had but brave foemen to deal with! But these fellows are only formidable through their number.

[*Exit.*]

Enter SICKINGEN and MARIA.

MARIA. I beseech thee, dear Sickingen, do not leave my brother! His horsemen, your own, and those of Selbitz, all are scattered; he is alone. Selbitz has been carried home to his castle wounded. I fear the worst.

SICKINGEN. Be comforted, I will not leave him.

Enter GOETZ.

GOETZ. Come to the chapel, the priest waits; in a few minutes you shall be united.

SICKINGEN. Let me remain with you.

GOETZ. You must come now to the chapel.

SICKINGEN. Willingly!—and then——

GOETZ.—Then you go your way.

SICKINGEN. Goetz!

GOETZ. Will you not to the chapel?

SICKINGEN. Come, come!

Exeunt.

SCENE XV. *Camp.*

CAPTAIN and OFFICERS.

CAPTAIN. How many are we in all?

OFFICER. A hundred and fifty——

CAPTAIN. Out of four hundred.—That is bad. Set out for Jaxthausen at once, before he collects his forces and attacks us on the way.

SCENE XVI. *Jaxthausen.*

GOETZ, ELIZABETH, MARIA, and SICKINGEN.

GOETZ. God bless you, give you happy days, and keep those for your children which he denies to you!

ELIZABETH. And may they be virtuous as you—then let come what will.

SICKINGEN. I thank you.—And you, my Maria! As I led you to the altar, so shall you lead me to happiness.

MARIA. Our pilgrimage will be together towards that distant and promised land.

GOETZ. A prosperous journey!

MARIA. That was not what I meant—We do not leave you.

GOETZ. You must, sister.

MARIA. You are very harsh, brother.

GOETZ. And you more affectionate than prudent.

Enter GEORGE.

GEORGE (*aside to GOETZ*). I can collect no troopers: One was inclined to come, but he changed his mind and refused.

GOETZ (*to GEORGE*). 'Tis well, George. Fortune begins to look coldly on me. I foreboded it, however. (*Aloud.*) Sickingen, I entreat you, depart this very evening. Persuade Maria—You are her husband—let her feel it—When women come across our undertakings, our enemies are more secure in the open field, than they would else be in their castles.

Enter a TROOPER.

TROOPER (*aside to GOETZ*). The Imperial squadron is in full and rapid march hither.

GOETZ. I have roused them with stripes of the rod! How many are they?

TROOPER. About two hundred—They can scarcely be six miles from us.

GOETZ. Have they passed the river yet?

TROOPER. No, my lord.

GOETZ. Had I but fifty men, they should not cross it. Hast thou seen Larse?

TROOPER. No, my lord.

GOETZ. Tell all to hold themselves ready.—We must part, dear friends. Weep on, my gentle Maria—Many a moment of happiness is yet in store for thee—It is better thou shouldst weep on thy wedding-day, than that present joy should be the forerunner of future misery.—Farewell, Maria!—Farewell, brother!

MARIA. I cannot leave you, sister. Dear brother, let us stay. Dost thou value my husband so little as to refuse his help in thy extremity?

GOETZ. Yes—it is gone far with me. Perhaps my fall is near. You are but beginning life, and should separate your lot from mine. I have ordered your horses to be saddled: you must away instantly.

MARIA. Brother! brother!

ELIZABETH (*to SICKINGEN*). Yield to his wishes. Speak to her.

SICKINGEN. Dear Maria! we must go.

MARIA. Thou too? My heart will break!

GOETZ. Then stay. In a few hours my castle will be surrounded.

MARIA (*weeping bitterly*). Alas! alas!

GOETZ. We will defend ourselves as long as we can.

MARIA. Mother of God, have mercy upon us!

GOETZ. And at last we must die or surrender. Thy tears will then have involved thy noble husband in the same misfortune with me.

MARIA. Thou torturest me!

GOETZ. Remain! Remain! We shall be taken together! Sickingen, thou wilt fall into the pit with me, out of which I had hoped thou shouldst have helped me.

MARIA. We will away—Sister—sister!

GOETZ. Place her in safety, and then think of me.

SICKINGEN. Never will I repose a night by her side till I know thou art out of danger.

GOETZ. Sister! dear sister!

[*Kisses her.*]

SICKINGEN. Away! away!

GOETZ. Yet one moment! I shall see you again. Be comforted, we shall meet again. (*Exeunt SICKINGEN and MARIA.*) I urged her to depart—yet when she leaves me, what would I not give to detain her! Elizabeth, thou stayest with me. [*Exit.*]

ELIZABETH. Till death!

GOETZ. Whom God loves, to him may He give such a wife.

Enter GEORGE.

GEORGE. They are near! I saw them from the tower. The sun is rising, and I perceived their lances glitter. I cared no more for them than a cat would for a whole army of mice. 'Tis true *we* play the mice at present.

GOETZ. Look to the fastenings of the gates; barricade them with beams and stones. (*Exit GEORGE.*) We'll exercise their patience, and they may chew away their valour in biting their nails. (*A trumpet from without. GOETZ goes to the window.*) Aha! Here comes a red-coated rascal to ask me whether I will be a scoundrel! What says he? (*The voice of the HERALD is heard indistinctly, as from a distance. GOETZ mutters to himself.*) A rope for thy throat! (*Voice again.*) "Offended majesty!"—Some priest has drawn up that proclamation. (*Voice concludes, and GOETZ answers from the window.*) Surrender—surrender at discretion

With whom speak you? Am I a robber? Tell your captain, that for the emperor I entertain, as I have ever done, all due respect; but as for him, he may——

[*Shuts the window with violence.*]

SCENE XVII. *The Kitchen.*

ELIZABETH *preparing food.* Enter GOETZ.

GOETZ. You have hard work, my poor wife!

ELIZABETH. Would it might last! But you can hardly hold out long.

GOETZ. We have not had time to provide ourselves.

ELIZABETH. And so many people as you have been wont to entertain. The wine is well-nigh finished.

GOETZ. If we can but hold out a certain time, they must propose a capitulation. We are doing them some damage, I promise you. They shoot the whole day, and only wound our walls and break our windows. LERSE is a gallant fellow. He slips about with his gun: if a rogue comes too nigh—Pop! there he lies! [*Firing.*]

Enter TROOPER.

TROOPER. We want live coals, gracious lady!

GOETZ. For what?

TROOPER. Our bullets are spent; we must cast some new ones.

GOETZ. How goes it with the powder?

TROOPER. There is as yet no want: we save our fire.

[*Firing at intervals. Exeunt GOETZ and ELIZABETH.*]

Enter LERSE *with a bullet-mould.* *Servants with coals.*

LERSE. Set them down, and then go and see for lead about the house; meanwhile I will make shift with this. (*Goes to the window, and takes out the leaden frames.*) Everything must be turned to account. So it is in this world—no one knows what a thing may come to: the glazier who made these frames little thought that the lead here was to give one of his grandsons his last headache; and the father that begot me little knew whether the fowls of heaven or the worms of the earth would pick my bones.

Enter GEORGE with a leaden spout.

GEORGE. Here's lead for thee! If you hit with only half of it, not one will return to tell his Majesty, "Thy servants have sped ill!"

LERSE (*cutting it down*). A famous piece!

GEORGE. The rain must seek some other way. I'm not afraid of it—a brave trooper and a smart shower will always find their road. [*They cast balls.*]

LERSE. Hold the ladle. (*Goes to the window.*) Yonder is a fellow creeping about with his rifle; he thinks our fire is spent. He shall have a bullet warm from the pan. [*He loads his rifle.*]

GEORGE (*puts down the mould*). Let me see.

LERSE. (*Fires.*) There lies the game!

GEORGE. He fired at me as I stepped out on the roof to get the lead. He killed a pigeon that sat near me; it fell into the spout. I thanked him for my dinner, and went back with the double booty. [*They cast balls.*]

LERSE. Now let us load, and go through the castle to earn our dinner.

Enter GOETZ.

GOETZ. Stay, Lerse, I must speak with thee. I will not keep thee, George, from the sport. [*Exit GEORGE.*]

GOETZ. They offer terms.

LERSE. I will go and hear what they have to say.

GOETZ. They will require me to enter myself into ward in some town on my knightly parole.

LERSE. That won't do. Suppose they allow us free liberty of departure? for we can expect no relief from Sickingen. We will bury all the valuables, where no divining-rod shall find them; leave them the bare walls, and come out with flying colours.

GOETZ. They will not permit us.

LERSE. It is worth the asking. We will demand a safe-conduct, and I will sally out.

SCENE XVIII. *A Hall.*

GOETZ, ELIZABETH, GEORGE, and TROOPERS at table.

GOETZ. Danger unites us, my friends! Be of good cheer; don't forget the bottle! The flask is empty.

Come, another, dear wife! (ELIZABETH *shakes her head.*)
Is there no more?

ELIZABETH (*aside*). Only one, which I have set apart for you.

GOETZ. Not so, my love! Bring it out; they need strengthening, more than I, for it is my quarrel.

ELIZABETH. Fetch it from the cupboard.

GOETZ. It is the last, and I feel as if we need not spare it. It is long since I have been so merry. (*They fill.*)
To the health of the emperor!

ALL. Long live the emperor!

GOETZ. Be it our last word when we die! I love him, for our fate is similar; but I am happier than he. To please the princes, he must direct his imperial squadrons against mice, while the rats gnaw his possessions.—I know he often wishes himself dead, rather than to be any longer the soul of such a crippled body. (*They fill.*) It will just go once more round. And when our blood runs low, like this flask; when we pour out its last ebbing drop (*empties the wine drop by drop into his goblet*), what then shall be our cry?

GEORGE. Freedom for ever!

GOETZ. Freedom for ever!

ALL. Freedom for ever!

GOETZ. And if that survive us we can die happy; for our spirits shall see our children's children, and their emperor happy! Did the servants of princes show the same filial attachment to their masters as you to me—did their masters serve the emperor as I would serve him—

GEORGE. Things would be widely different.

GOETZ. Not so much so as it would appear. Have I not known worthy men among the princes? And can the race be extinct? Men, happy in their own minds and in their subjects, who could bear a free, noble brother in their neighbourhood without harbouring either fear or envy; whose hearts expanded when they saw their table surrounded by their free equals, and who did not think the knights unfit companions till they had degraded themselves by courtly homage.

GEORGE. Have you known such princes?

GOETZ. Ay, truly. As long as I live I shall recollect

how the Landgrave of Hanau made a grand hunting-party, and the princes and free feudatories dined under the open heaven, and the country-people all thronged to see them; it was no selfish masquerade instituted for his own private pleasure or vanity.—To see the great round-headed peasant lads and the pretty brown girls, the sturdy hinds, and the venerable old men, a crowd of happy faces, all as merry as if they rejoiced in the splendour of their master, which he shared with them under God's free sky!

GEORGE. He must have been as good a master as you.

GOETZ. And may we not hope that many such will rule together some future day, to whom reverence to the emperor, peace and friendship with their neighbours, and the love of their vassals, shall be the best and dearest family treasure handed down to their children's children? Every one will then keep and improve his own, instead of reckoning nothing as gain that is not stolen from his neighbours.

GEORGE. And should we have no more forays?

GOETZ. Would to God there were no restless spirits in all Germany!—we should still have enough to do! We would clear the mountains of wolves, and bring our peaceable laborious neighbour a dish of game from the wood, and eat it together. Were that not full employment, we would join our brethren, and, like cherubims with flaming swords, defend the frontiers of the empire against those wolves the Turks, and those foxes the French, and guard for our beloved emperor both extremities of his extensive empire. That would be a life, George! To risk one's head for the safety of all Germany. (GEORGE springs up.) Whither away?

GEORGE. Alas! I forgot we were besieged—besieged by the very emperor; and before we can expose our lives in his defence, we must risk them for our liberty.

GOETZ. Be of good cheer.

Enter LERSE.

LERSE. Freedom! freedom! The cowardly poltroons—the hesitating, irresolute asses. You are to depart with men, weapons, horses, and armour; provisions you are to leave behind.

GOETZ. They will hardly find enough to exercise their jaws.

LERSE (*aside to GOETZ*). Have you hidden the plate and money?

GOETZ. No! Wife, go with Lerse; he has something to tell thee. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE XIX. *The Court of the Castle.*

GEORGE (*in the stable. Sings*).

An urchin once, as I have heard,

Ha! ha!

Had caught and caged a little bird,

Sa! sa!

Ha! ha!

Sa! sa!

He viewed the prize with heart elate,

Ha! ha!

Thrust in his hand—ah treacherous fate!

Sa! sa!

Ha! ha!

Sa! sa!

Away the titmouse wing'd its flight,

Ha! ha!

And laugh'd to scorn the silly wight,

Sa! sa!

Ha! ha!

Sa! sa!

Enter GOETZ.

GOETZ. How goes it?

GEORGE (*brings out his horse*). All saddled!

GOETZ. Thou art quick.

GEORGE. As the bird escaped from the cage.

Enter all the besieged.

GOETZ. Have you all your rifles? Not yet! Go, take the best from the armoury, 'tis all one; we'll ride on in advance.

GEORGE (*sings*).

Ha! ha!

Sa! sa!

Ha! ha!

SCENE XX. *The Armoury.*

Two TROOPERS choosing guns.

FIRST TROOPER. I'll have this one.

SECOND TROOPER. And I this—but yonder's a better.

FIRST TROOPER. Never mind—make haste.

[*Tumult and firing without.*]

SECOND TROOPER. Hark!

FIRST TROOPER (*springs to the window*). Good heavens, they are murdering our master! He is unhorsed! George is down!

SECOND TROOPER. How shall we get off? Over the wall by the walnut-tree, and into the field. [*Exit.*]

FIRST TROOPER. Lerse keeps his ground; I will to him. If they die, I will not survive them. [*Exit.*]

ACT IV.

SCENE I. *An Inn in the city of Heilbronn.*

GOETZ (*solus*).

GOETZ. I am like the evil spirit whom the Capuchin conjured into a sack. I fret and labour but all in vain. The perjured villains! (*Enter ELIZABETH.*) What news, Elizabeth, of my dear, my trusty followers?

ELIZABETH. Nothing certain: some are slain, some are prisoners; no one could or would tell me further particulars.

GOETZ. Is this the reward of fidelity, of filial obedience? —“That it may be well with thee, and that thy days may be long in the land!”

ELIZABETH. Dear husband, murmur not against our heavenly Father. They have their reward. It was born with them—a noble and generous heart. Even in the dungeon they are free. Pay attention to the imperial commissioners; their heavy gold chains become them—

GOETZ. As a necklace becomes a sow! I should like to see George and Lerse in fetters!

ELIZABETH. It were a sight to make angels weep.

GOETZ. I would not weep—I would clench my teeth, and gnaw my lip in fury. What! in fetters! Had ye but loved me less, dear lads! I could never look at them enough . . . What! to break their word pledged in the name of the emperor!

ELIZABETH. Put away these thoughts. Reflect; you must appear before the council—you are in no mood to meet them, and I fear the worst.

GOETZ. What harm can they do me?

ELIZABETH. Here comes the sergeant.

GOETZ. What! the ass of justice that carries the sacks to the mill and the dung to the field? What now?

Enter SERGEANT.

SERGEANT. The lords commissioners are at the Council House, and require your presence.

GOETZ. I come.

SERGEANT. I am to escort you.

GOETZ. Too much honour.

ELIZABETH. Be but cool.

GOETZ. Fear nothing.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II. *The Council-House at Heilbronn.*

The IMPERIAL COMMISSIONERS seated at a table. The CAPTAIN and the MAGISTRATES of the city attending.

MAGISTRATE. In pursuance of your order, we have collected the stoutest and most determined of our citizens. They are at hand, in order, at a nod from you, to seize Berlichingen.

COMMISSIONER. We shall have much pleasure in communicating to his imperial majesty the zeal with which you have obeyed his illustrious commands.—Are they artizans?

MAGISTRATE. Smiths, coopers, and carpenters, men with hands hardened by labour; and resolute here.

[Points to his breast.

COMMISSIONER. 'Tis well.

Enter SERGEANT.

SERGEANT. Goetz von Berlichingen waits without.

COMMISSIONER. Admit him.

Enter GOETZ.

GOETZ. God save you, sirs! What would you with me?

COMMISSIONER. First, that you consider where you are; and in whose presence.

GOETZ. By my faith, I know you right well, sirs.

COMMISSIONER. You acknowledge allegiance.

GOETZ. With all my heart.

COMMISSIONER. Be seated.

[Points to a stool.

GOETZ. What, down there? I'd rather stand. That stool smells so of poor sinners, as indeed does the whole apartment.

COMMISSIONER. Stand, then.

GOETZ. To business, if you please.

COMMISSIONER. We shall proceed in due order.

GOETZ. I am glad to hear it. Would you had always done so.

COMMISSIONER. You know how you fell into our hands, and are a prisoner at discretion.

GOETZ. What will you give me to forget it?

COMMISSIONER. Could I give you modesty, I should better your affairs.

GOETZ. Better my affairs! could you but do that? To repair is more difficult than to destroy.

SECRETARY. Shall I put all this on record?

COMMISSIONER. Only what is to the purpose.

GOETZ. As far as I'm concerned you may print every word of it.

COMMISSIONER. You fell into the power of the emperor

whose paternal goodness got the better of his justice, and, instead of throwing you into a dungeon, ordered you to repair to his beloved city of Heilbronn. You gave your knightly parole to appear, and await the termination in all humility.

GOETZ. Well; I am here, and await it.

COMMISSIONER. And we are here to intimate to you his imperial majesty's mercy and clemency. He is pleased to forgive your rebellion, to release you from the ban and all well-merited punishment; provided you do, with becoming humility, receive his bounty, and subscribe to the articles which shall be read unto you.

GOETZ. I am his majesty's faithful servant, as ever. One word, ere you proceed. My people—where are they? What will be done with them?

COMMISSIONER. That concerns you not.

GOETZ. So may the emperor turn his face from you in the hour of your need. They were my comrades, and are so now. What have you done with them?

COMMISSIONER. We are not bound to account to you.

GOETZ. Ah! I forgot that you are not even pledged to perform what you have promised, much less—

COMMISSIONER. Our business is to lay the articles before you. Submit yourself to the emperor, and you may find a way to petition for the life and freedom of your comrades

GOETZ. Your paper.

COMMISSIONER. Secretary, read it.

SECRETARY (*reads*). "I, Goetz of Berlichingen, make public acknowledgment, by these presents, that I, having lately risen in rebellion against the emperor and empire—"

GOETZ. 'Tis false! I am no rebel, I have committed no offence against the emperor, and with the empire I have no concern.

COMMISSIONER. Be silent, and hear further.

GOETZ. I will hear no further. Let any one arise and bear witness. Have I ever taken one step against the emperor, or against the House of Austria? Has not the whole tenor of my conduct proved that I feel better than any one else what all Germany owes to its head; and especially what the free knights and feudatories owe to

their liege lord the emperor? I should be a villain could I be induced to subscribe that paper.

COMMISSIONER. Yet we have strict orders to try and persuade you by fair means, or, in case of your refusal, to throw you into prison.

GOETZ. Into prison!—Me?

COMMISSIONER. Where you may expect your fate from the hands of justice, since you will not take it from those of mercy.

GOETZ. To prison! You abuse the imperial power! To prison! That was not the emperor's command. What, ye traitors, to dig a pit for me, and hang out your oath, your knightly honour as the bait! To promise me permission to ward myself on parole, and then again to break your treaty!

COMMISSIONER. We owe no faith to robbers.

GOETZ. Wert thou not the representative of my sovereign, whom I respect even in the vilest counterfeit, thou should swallow that word, or choke upon it. I was engaged in an honourable feud. Thou mightest thank God, and magnify thyself before the world, hadst thou ever done as gallant a deed as that with which I now stand charged. (*The COMMISSIONER makes a sign to the MAGISTRATE of Heilbronn, who rings a bell.*) Not for the sake of paltry gain, not to wrest followers or lands from the weak and the defenceless, have I sallied forth. To rescue my page and defend my own person—see ye any rebellion in that? The emperor and his magnates, reposing on their pillows, would never have felt our need. I have, God be praised, one hand left, and I have done well to use it.

Enter a party of Artizans armed with halberds and swords.

GOETZ. What means this?

COMMISSIONER. You will not listen.—Seize him!

GOETZ. Let none come near me who is not a very Hungarian ox. One salutation from my iron fist shall cure him of headache, toothache, and every other ache under the wide heaven! (*They rush upon him. He strikes one down; and snatches a sword from another. They stand aloof.*) Come on! come on! I should like to become acquainted with the bravest among you.

COMMISSIONER. Surrender!

GOETZ. With a sword in my hand! Know ye not that it depends but upon myself to make way through all these hares and gain the open field? But I will teach you how a man should keep his word. Promise me but free ward, and I will give up my sword, and am again your prisoner.

COMMISSIONER. How! Would you treat with the emperor, sword in hand?

GOETZ. God forbid!—only with you and your worthy fraternity! You may go home, good people; you are only losing your time, and here there is nothing to be got but bruises.

COMMISSIONER. Seize him! What! does not your love for the emperor supply you with courage?

GOETZ. No more than the emperor supplies them with plaister for the wounds their courage would earn them.

Enter SERGEANT, hastily.

OFFICER. The warder has just discovered from the castle-tower, a troop of more than two hundred horsemen hastening towards the town. Unperceived by us, they have pressed forward from behind the hill, and threaten our walls.

COMMISSIONER. Alas! alas! What can this mean?

A SOLDIER enters.

SOLDIER. Francis of Sickingen waits at the drawbridge, and informs you that he has heard how perfidiously you have broken your word to his brother-in-law, and how the Council of Heilbronn have aided and abetted in the treason. He is now come to insist upon justice, and if refused it, threatens, within an hour, to fire the four quarters of your town, and abandon it to be plundered by his vassals.

GOETZ. My gallant brother!

COMMISSIONER. Withdraw, Goetz. (*Exit GOETZ.*) What is to be done?

MAGISTRATE. Have compassion upon us and our town! Sickingen is inexorable in his wrath; he will keep his word.

COMMISSIONER. Shall we forget what is due to ourselves and the emperor?

CAPTAIN. If we had but men to enforce it; but situated

as we are, a show of resistance would only make matters worse. It is better for us to yield.

MAGISTRATE. Let us apply to Goetz to put in a good word for us. I feel as though I saw the town already in flames.

COMMISSIONER. Let Goetz approach. (*Enter GOETZ.*)

GOETZ. What now?

COMMISSIONER. Thou wilt do well to dissuade thy brother-in-law from his rebellious interference. Instead of rescuing thee, he will only plunge thee deeper in destruction, and become the companion of thy fall!

GOETZ (*sees Elizabeth at the door, and speaks to her aside*). Go; tell him instantly to break in and force his way hither, but to spare the town. As for these rascals, if they offer any resistance, let him use force. I care not if I lose my life, provided they are all knocked on the head at the same time.

SCENE III. *A large Hall in the Council-House, beset by
SICKINGEN's Troops.*

Enter SICKINGEN and GOETZ.

GOETZ. That was help from heaven. How camest thou so opportunely and unexpectedly, brother?

SICKINGEN. Without witchcraft. I had dispatched two or three messengers to learn how it fared with thee; when I heard of the perjury of these fellows, I set out instantly, and now we have them safe.

GOETZ. I ask nothing but knightly ward upon my parole.

SICKINGEN. You are too noble. Not even to avail yourself of the advantage which the honest man has over the perjurer! They are in the wrong, and we will not give them cushions to sit upon. They have shamefully abused the imperial authority, and, if I know anything of the emperor, you might safely insist upon more favourable terms. You ask too little.

GOETZ. I have ever been content with little.

SICKINGEN. And therefore that little has always been denied thee. My proposal is, that they shall release your

servants, and permit you all to return to your castle on parole—you can promise not to leave it till the emperor's pleasure be known. You will be safer there than here.

GOETZ. They will say my property is escheated to the emperor.

SICKINGEN. Then we will answer thou canst dwell there, and keep it for his service till he restores it to thee again. Let them wriggle like eels in the net, they shall not escape us! They may talk of the imperial dignity—of their commission. We will not mind that. I know the emperor, and have some influence with him. He has ever wished to have thee in his service. You will not be long in your castle without being summoned to serve him.

GOETZ. God grant it, ere I forget the use of arms!

SICKINGEN. Valour can never be forgotten, as it can never be learnt. Fear nothing! When thy affairs are settled, I will repair to court, where my enterprises begin to ripen. Good fortune seems to smile on them. I want only to sound the emperor's mind. The towns of Triers and Pfalz as soon expect that the sky should fall, as that I shall come down upon their heads. But I will come like a hail-storm! and if I am successful, thou shalt soon be brother to an elector. I had hoped for thy assistance in this undertaking.

GOETZ (*looks at his hand*). O! that explains the dream I had the night before I promised Maria to Weislingen. I thought he vowed eternal fidelity, and held my iron hand so fast that it loosened from the arm. Alas! I am at this moment more defenceless than when it was shot away. Weislingen! Weislingen!

SICKINGEN. Forget the traitor! We will thwart his plans, and undermine his authority, till shame and remorse shall gnaw him to death. I see, I see the downfall of our enemies.—Goetz—only half a year more!

GOETZ. Thy soul soars high! I know not why, but for some time past no fair prospects have dawned upon me. I have been ere now in sore distress—I have been a prisoner before—but never did I experience such a depression.

SICKINGEN. Fortune gives courage. Come, let us to the bigwigs. They have had time enough to deliberate, let us take the trouble upon ourselves.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV. *The Castle of Adelaide, Augsburg.*ADELAIDE and WEISLINGEN *discovered.*

ADELAIDE. This is detestable.

WEISLINGEN. I have gnashed my teeth. So good a plan—so well followed out—and after all to leave him in possession of his castle! That cursed Sickingen!

ADELAIDE. The council should not have consented.

WEISLINGEN. They were in the net. What else could they do? Sickingen threatened them with fire and sword,—the haughty, vindictive man! I hate him! His power waxes like a mountain torrent—let it but gain a few brooks, and others come pouring to its aid.

ADELAIDE. Have they no emperor?

WEISLINGEN. My dear wife, he waxes old and feeble; he is only the shadow of what he was. When he heard what had been done, and I and the other counsellors murmured indignantly: "Let them alone!" said he; "I can spare my old Goetz his little fortress, and if he remains quiet there, what have you to say against him?" We spoke of the welfare of the state: "Oh," said he, "that I had always had counsellors who would have urged my restless spirit to consult more the happiness of individuals!"

ADELAIDE. He has lost the spirit of a prince!

WEISLINGEN. We inveighed against Sickingen!—"He is my faithful servant," said he; "and if he has not acted by my express order, he has performed what I wished better than my plenipotentiaries, and I can ratify what he has done as well after as before."

ADELAIDE. 'Tis enough to drive one mad.

WEISLINGEN. Yet I have not given up all hope. Goetz is on parole to remain quiet in his castle. 'Tis impossible for him to keep his promise, and we shall soon have some new cause of complaint.

ADELAIDE. That is the more likely, as we may hope that the old emperor will soon leave the world, and Charles, his gallant successor, will display a more princely mind.

WEISLINGEN. Charles! He is neither chosen nor crowned.

ADELAIDE. Who does not expect and hope for that event?

WEISLINGEN. You have a great idea of his abilities; one might almost think you looked on him with partial eyes.

ADELAIDE. You insult me, Weislingen. For what do you take me?

WEISLINGEN. I do not mean to offend; but I cannot be silent upon the subject. Charles's marked attentions to you disquiet me.

ADELAIDE. And do I receive them as——

WEISLINGEN. You are a woman; and no woman hates those who pay their court to her.

ADELAIDE. This from you?

WEISLINGEN. It cuts me to the heart—the dreadful thought—Adelaide.

ADELAIDE. Can I not cure thee of this folly?

WEISLINGEN. If thou wouldst—Thou canst leave the court.

ADELAIDE. But upon what pretence? Art thou not here? Must I leave you and all my friends, to shut myself up with the owls in your solitary castle? No, Weislingen, that will never do; be at rest, thou knowest I love thee.

WEISLINGEN. That is my anchor so long as the cable holds.

ADELAIDE. Ah! It is come to this? This was yet wanting. The projects of my bosom are too great to brook the interruption. Charles—the great, the gallant Charles—the future emperor—shall he be the only man unrewarded by my favour? Think not, Weislingen, to hinder me—else shalt thou to earth; my way lies over thee!

Enter FRANCIS (with a letter).

FRANCIS. Here, gracious lady.

ADELAIDE. Hadst thou it from Charles' own hand?

FRANCIS. Yes.

ADELAIDE. What ails thee? Thou look'st so mournful!

FRANCIS. It is your pleasure that I should pine away, and waste my fairest years in agonizing despair.

ADELAIDE (*aside*). I pity him; and how little would it cost me to make him happy. (*Aloud*.) Be of good courage, youth! I know thy love and fidelity, and will not be ungrateful.

FRANCIS (*with stifled breath*). If thou wert capable of ingratitude, I could not survive it. There boils not a drop of blood in my veins but what is thine own—I have not a single feeling but to love and to serve thee!

ADELAIDE. Dear Francis!

FRANCIS. You flatter me. (*Bursts into tears*.) Does my attachment deserve only to be a stepping stool to another—to see all your thoughts fixed upon Charles?

ADELAIDE. You know not what you wish, and still less what you say.

FRANCIS (*stamping with vexation and rage*). No more will I be your slave, you go-between!

ADELAIDE. Francis, you forget yourself.

FRANCIS. To sacrifice my beloved master and myself—

ADELAIDE. Out of my sight!

FRANCIS. Gracious lady!

ADELAIDE. Go, betray to thy beloved master the secret of my soul! Fool that I was to take thee for what thou art not.

FRANCIS. Dear lady! you know how I love you.

ADELAIDE. And thou, who wast my friend—so near my heart—go, betray me.

FRANCIS. Rather would I tear my heart from my breast! Forgive me, gentle lady! my heart is too full, my senses desert me.

ADELAIDE. Thou dear, affectionate boy! (*She takes him by both hands, draws him towards her and kisses him. He throws himself weeping upon her neck.*) Leave me!

FRANCIS (*his voice choked by tears*). Heavens!

ADELAIDE. Leave me! The walls are traitors. Leave me! (*Breaks from him.*) Be but steady in fidelity and love, and the fairest reward is thine. [*Exit.*]

FRANCIS. The fairest reward! let me but live till that moment—I could murder my father, were he an obstacle to my happiness! [*Exit.*]

SCENE V. *Jaxthausen.*

GOETZ *seated at a table with writing materials.* ELIZABETH
beside him with her work.

GOETZ. This idle life does not suit me. My confinement becomes more irksome every day; I would I could sleep, or persuade myself that quiet is agreeable.

ELIZABETH. Continue writing the account of thy deeds which thou hast commenced. Give into the hands of thy friends evidence to put thine enemies to shame; make a noble posterity acquainted with thy real character.

GOETZ. Alas! writing is but busy idleness; it wearies me. While I am writing what I have done, I lament the misspent time in which I might do more.

ELIZABETH (*takes the writing*). Be not impatient. Thou hast come to thy first imprisonment at Heilbronn.

GOETZ. That was always an unlucky place to me.

ELIZABETH (*reads*). "There were even some of the confederates who told me that I had acted foolishly in appearing before my bitterest enemies, who, as I might suspect, would not deal justly with me." And what didst thou answer? Write on.

GOETZ. I said, "Have I not often risked life and limb for the welfare and property of others, and shall I not do so for the honour of my knightly word?"

ELIZABETH. Thus does fame speak of thee.

GOETZ. They shall not rob me of my honour. They have taken all else from me—property—liberty—everything.

ELIZABETH. I happened once to stand in an inn near the Lords of Miltenberg and Singlingen, who knew me not. Then I was joyful as at the birth of my first-born; for they extolled thee to each other, and said,—He is the mirror of knighthood, noble and merciful in prosperity, dauntless and true in misfortune.

GOETZ. Let them show me the man to whom I have broken my word. Heaven knows, my ambition has ever been to labour for my neighbour more than for myself, and to acquire the fame of a gallant and irreproachable

knight, rather than principalities or power; and, God be praised! I have gained the meed of my labour.

Enter GEORGE and LERSE with game.

GOETZ. Good luck to my gallant huntsmen!

GEORGE. Such have we become from gallant troopers. Boots can easily be cut down into buskins.

LERSE. The chase is always something—'tis a kind of war.

GEORGE. Yes; if we were not always crossed by these imperial gamekeepers. Don't you recollect, my lord, how you prophesied we should become huntsmen when the world was turned topsy-turvy? We are become so now without waiting for that.

GOETZ. 'Tis all the same, we are pushed out of our sphere.

GEORGE. These are wonderful times! For eight days a dreadful comet has been seen—all Germany fears that it portends the death of the emperor, who is very ill.

GOETZ. Very ill! Then our career draws to a close.

LERSE. And in the neighbourhood there are terrible commotions; the peasants have made a formidable insurrection.

GOETZ. Where?

LERSE. In the heart of Swabia; they are plundering, burning, and slaying. I fear they will sack the whole country.

GEORGE. It is a horrible warfare! They have already risen in a hundred places, and daily increase in number. A hurricane too has lately torn up whole forests; and in the place where the insurrection began, two fiery swords have been seen in the sky crossing each other.

GOETZ. Then some of my poor friends and neighbours no doubt suffer innocently.

GEORGE. Alas! that we are pent up thus!

ACT V.

SCENE I. *A Village plundered by the insurgent Peasantry. Shrieks and tumult. Women, old Men, and Children fly across the Stage.*

OLD MAN. Away! away! let us fly from the murdering dogs.

WOMAN. Sacred heaven! How blood-red is the sky! How blood-red the setting sun!

ANOTHER. That must be fire.

A THIRD. My husband! my husband!

OLD MAN. Away! away! To the wood! [*Exeunt*]

Enter LINK and Insurgents.

LINK. Whoever opposes you, down with him! The village is ours. Let none of the booty be injured, none be left behind. Plunder clean and quickly. We must soon set fire——

Enter METZLER, coming down the hill.

METZLER. How do things go with you, Link?

LINK. Merrily enough, as you see; you are just in time for the fun.—Whence come you?

METZLER. From Weinsberg. There was a jubilee.

LINK. How so?

METZLER. We stabbed them all, in such heaps, it was a joy to see it!

LINK. All whom?

METZLER. Dietrich von Weiler led up the dance. The fool! We were all raging round the church steeple. He looked out and wished to treat with us.—Baf! A ball through his head! Up we rushed like a tempest, and the fellow soon made his exit by the window.

LINK. Huzza!

METZLER (*to the peasants*). Ye dogs, must I find you legs? How they gape and loiter, the asses!

LINK. Set fire! Let them roast in the flames! forward! Push on, ye dolts.

METZLER. Then we brought out Helfenstein, Eltershofen, thirteen of the nobility—eighty in all. They were led

out on the plain before Heilbronn. What a shouting and jubilee among our lads as the long row of miserable sinners passed by; they stared at each other, and, heaven and earth! we surrounded them before they were aware, and then dispatched them all with our pikes.

LINK. Why was I not there?

METZLER. Never in all my life did I see such fun.

LINK. On! on! Bring all out!

PEASANT. All's clear.

LINK. Then fire the village at the four corners.

METZLER. 'Twill make a fine bonfire! Hadst thou but seen how the fellows tumbled over one another, and croaked like frogs! It warmed my heart like a cup of brandy. One Rexinger was there, a fellow, with a white plume, and flaxen locks, who, when he went out hunting, used to drive us before him like dogs, and with dogs. I had not caught sight of him all the while, when suddenly his fool's visage looked me full in the face. Push! went the spear between his ribs, and there he lay stretched on all-fours above his companions. The fellows lay kicking in a heap like the hares that used to be driven together at their grand hunting parties.

LINK. It smokes finely already!

METZLER. Yonder it burns! Come, let us with the booty to the main body.

LINK. Where do they halt?

METZLER. Between this and Heilbronn. They wish to choose a captain whom every one will respect, for we are after all only their equals; they feel this, and turn restive.

LINK. Whom do they propose?

METZLER. Maximilian Stumpf, or Goetz von Berlichingen.

LINK. That would be well. 'Twould give the thing credit should Goetz accept it. He has ever been held a worthy independent knight. Away, away! We march towards Heilbronn! Pass the word.

METZLER. The fire will light us a good part of the way. Hast thou seen the great comet?

LINK. Yes. It is a dreadful ghastly sign! As we march by night we can see it well. It rises about one o'clock.

METZLER. And is visible but for an hour and a quarter, like an arm brandishing a sword, and bloody red!

LINK. Didst thou mark the three stars at the sword's hilt and point?

METZLER. And the broad haze-coloured stripe illuminated by a thousand streamers like lances, and between them little swords.

LINK. I shuddered with horror. The sky was pale red streaked with ruddy flames, and among them grisly figures with shaggy hair and beards.

METZLER. Did you see them too? And how they all swam about as though in a sea of blood, and struggled in confusion, enough to turn one's brain.

LINK. Away! away!

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II. *Open Country. In the distance two Villages and an Abbey are burning.*

KOHL, WILD, MAXIMILIAN STUMF, *Insurgents.*

STUMF. You cannot ask me to be your leader; it were bad for you and for me: I am a vassal of the Palsgrave, and how shall I make war against my liege lord? Besides, you would always suspect I did not act from my heart.

KOHL. We knew well thou wouldst make some excuse.

Enter GEORGE, LERSE, and GOETZ.

GOETZ. What would you with me?

KOHL. You must be our captain.

GOETZ. How can I break my knightly word to the emperor. I am under the ban: I cannot quit my territory.

WILD. That's no excuse.

GOETZ. And were I free, and you wanted to deal with the lords and nobles as you did at Weinsberg, laying waste the country round with fire and sword, and should wish me to be an abettor of your shameless, barbarous doings, rather than be your captain, you should slay me like a mad dog!

KOHL. What has been done, cannot be undone.

STUMF. That was just the misfortune, that they had no leader whom they honoured, and who could bridle

their fury. I beseech thee, Goetz, accept the office! The princes will be grateful; all Germany will thank thee. It will be for the weal and prosperity of all. The country and its inhabitants will be preserved.

GOETZ. Why dost not thou accept it?

STUMF. I have given them reasons for my refusal.

KOHL. We have no time to waste in useless speeches. Once for all! Goetz, be our chief, or look to thy castle and thy head! Take two hours to consider of it. Guard him!

GOETZ. To what purpose? I am as resolved now as I shall ever be. Why have ye risen up in arms? If to recover your rights and freedom, why do you plunder and lay waste the land? Will you abstain from such evil doings, and act as true men who know what they want? Then will I be your chief for eight days, and help you in your lawful and orderly demands.

WILD. What has been done was done in the first heat, and thy interference is not needed to prevent it for the future.

KOHL. Thou must engage with us at least for a quarter of a year.

STUMF. Say four weeks, that will satisfy both parties.

GOETZ. Then be it so.

KOHL. Your hand!

GOETZ. But you must promise to send the treaty you have made with me in writing to all your troops, and to punish severely those who infringe it.

WILD. Well, it shall be done.

GOETZ. Then I bind myself to you for four weeks.

STUMF. Good fortune to you! In whatever thou doest, spare our noble lord the Palsgrave.

KOHL (*aside*). See that none speak to him without our knowledge.

GOETZ. Lerse, go to my wife. Protect her; you shall soon have news of me.

[*Exeunt* GOETZ, STUMF, GEORGE, LERSE, and some PEASANTS.]

Enter METZLER, LINK, and their followers.

METZLER. Who talks of a treaty? What's the use of a treaty?

LINK. It is shameful to make any such bargain.

KOHL. We know as well what we want as you; and we may do or let alone what we please.

WILD. This raging, and burning, and murdering must have an end some day or other; and by renouncing it just now, we gain a brave leader.

METZLER. How? An end? Thou traitor! why are we here but to avenge ourselves on our enemies, and enrich ourselves at their expense? Some prince's slave has been tampering with thee.

KOHL. Come, Wild, he is like a brute-beast.

[*Exeunt WILD and KOHL.*]

METZLER. Ay, go your way, no hand will stick by you. The villains! Link, we'll set on the others to burn Miltenberg yonder; and if they begin a quarrel about the treaty, we'll cut off the heads of those that made it.

LINK. We have still the greater body of peasants on our side.

[*Exeunt with Insurgents.*]

SCENE III. *A Hill and Prospect of the Country. In the flat scene a Mill. A body of Horsemen.*

WEISLINGEN *comes out of the Mill, followed by FRANCIS and a COURIER.*

WEISLINGEN. My horse! Have you announced it to the other nobles?

COURIER. At least seven standards will meet you in the wood behind Miltenberg. The peasants are marching in that direction. Couriers are dispatched on all sides; the entire confederacy will soon be assembled. Our plan cannot fail; and they say there is dissension among them.

WEISLINGEN. So much the better. Francis!

FRANCIS. Gracious sir!

WEISLINGEN. Discharge thine errand punctually. I bind it upon thy soul. Give her the letter. She shall from the court to my castle instantly. Thou must see her depart, and bring me notice of it.

FRANCIS. Your commands shall be obeyed.

WEISLINGEN. Tell her she *shall* go. (*To the COURIER.*) Lead us by the nearest and best road.

COURIER. We must go round; all the rivers are swollen with the late heavy rains.

SCENE IV. *Jaxthausen.*

ELIZABETH and LERSE.

LERSE. Gracious lady, be comforted!

ELIZABETH. Alas! Lerse, the tears stood in his eyes when he took leave of me. It is dreadful, dreadful!

LERSE. He will return.

ELIZABETH. It is not that. When he went forth to gain honourable victories, never did grief sit heavy at my heart. I then rejoiced in the prospect of his return, which I now dread.

LERSE. So noble a man.

ELIZABETH. Call him not so. There lies the new misery. The miscreants! they threatened to murder his family and burn his castle. Should he return, gloomy, most gloomy shall I see his brow. His enemies will forge scandalous accusations against him, which he will be unable to refute.

LERSE. He will and can.

ELIZABETH. He has broken his parole:—Canst thou deny that?

LERSE. No! he was constrained; what reason is there to condemn him?

ELIZABETH. Malice seeks not reasons, but pretexts. He has become an ally of rebels, malefactors, and murderers:—he has become their chief. Say No to that.

LERSE. Cease to torment yourself and me. Have they not solemnly sworn to abjure all such doings as those at Weinsberg? Did I not myself hear them say, in remorse, that, had not that been done already, it never should have been done? Must not the princes and nobles return him their best thanks for having undertaken the dangerous office of leading these unruly people, in order to restrain their rage, and to save so many lives and possessions?

ELIZABETH. Thou art an affectionate advocate. Should they take him prisoner, deal with him as with a rebel, and bring his grey hairs . . . Lerse, I should go mad!

LERSE. Send sleep to refresh her body, dear Father of mankind, if Thou deniest comfort to her soul!

ELIZABETH. George has promised to bring news, but

he will not be allowed to do so. They are worse than prisoners. Well I know they are watched like enemies.—The gallant boy! he would not leave his master.

LERSE. The very heart within me bled as I left him.—Had you not needed my help, all the terrors of grisly death should not have separated us.

ELIZABETH. I know not where Sickingen is.—Could I but send a message to Maria!

LERSE. Write, then:—I will take care that she receives it. [Exit.]

SCENE V. A Village.

Enter GOETZ and GEORGE

GOETZ. To horse, George! Quick! I see Miltenberg in flames—Is it thus they keep the treaty?—Ride to them, tell them my purpose.—The murderous incendiaries—I renounce them—Let them make a thieving gipsy their captain, not me!—Quick, George! (*Exit GEORGE.*) Would that I were a thousand miles hence, at the bottom of the deepest dungeon in Turkey!—Could I but come off with honour from them! I have thwarted them every day, and told them the bitterest truths, in the hope they might weary of me and let me go.

Enter an UNKNOWN.

UNKNOWN. God save you, gallant sir!

GOETZ. I thank you! What is your errand? Your name?

UNKNOWN. My name does not concern my business. I come to tell you that your life is in danger. The insurgent leaders are weary of hearing from you such harsh language, and are resolved to rid themselves of you. Speak them fair, or endeavour to escape from them; and God be with you! [Exit.]

GOETZ. To quit life in this fashion, Goetz, to end thus? But be it so—My death will be the clearest proof to the world that I have had nothing in common with the miscreants.

Enter INSURGENTS.

FIRST INSURGENT. Captain, they are prisoners, they are slain!

GOETZ. Who?

SECOND INSURGENT. Those who burned Miltenberg; a troop of confederate cavalry suddenly charged upon them from behind the hill.

GOETZ. They have their reward. O George! George! They have taken him prisoner with the caitiffs—My George! my George!

Enter INSURGENTS in confusion.

LINK. Up, sir captain, up!—There is no time to lose—The enemy is at hand, and in force.

GOETZ. Who burned Miltenberg?

METZLER. If you mean to pick a quarrel, we'll soon show you how we'll end it.

KOHL. Look to your own safety and ours;—Up!

GOETZ (*to METZLER*). Darest thou threaten me, thou scoundrel . . . Thinkest thou to awe me, because thy garments are stained with the Count of Helfenstein's blood?

METZLER. Berlichingen!

GOETZ. Thou mayest call me by my name, and my children will not be ashamed to hear it.

METZLER. Out upon thee coward!—Prince's slave!

[*GOETZ strikes him down—The others interpose.*]

KOHL. Ye are mad!—The enemy are breaking in on all sides, and you quarrel!

LINK. Away! Away! [*Cries and tumult—The INSURGENTS fly across the stage.*]

Enter WEISLINGEN and TROOPERS.

WEISLINGEN. Pursue! Pursue! they fly!—Stop neither for darkness nor rain.—I hear Goetz is among them; look that he escape you not. Our friends say he is sorely wounded. (*Exeunt TROOPERS.*) And when I have caught thee—it will be merciful secretly to execute the sentence of death in prison. Thus he perishes from the memory of man, and then, foolish heart, thou mayst beat more freely.

SCENE VI. *The front of a Gipsy-hut in a wild forest.—
Night.—A fire before the hut, at which are seated the
Mother of the Gipsies and a girl.*

MOTHER. Throw some fresh straw upon the thatch,
daughter: There'll be heavy rain again to-night.

Enter a GIPSY-BOY.

BOY. A dormouse, mother! and look! two field-mice!

MOTHER. I'll skin them and roast them for thee, and
thou shalt have a cap of their skins. Thou bleedest!

BOY. Dormouse bit me.

MOTHER. Fetch some dead wood, that the fire may burn
bright when thy father comes: he will be wet through
and through.

Another Gipsy-woman with a child at her back.

FIRST WOMAN. Hast thou had good luck?

SECOND WOMAN. Ill enough. The whole country is in
an uproar, one's life is not safe a moment. Two villages
are in a blaze.

FIRST WOMAN. Is it fire that glares so yonder? I have
been watching it long. One is so accustomed now to fiery
signs in the heavens.

The CAPTAIN OF THE GIPSIES enters with three of his gang.

CAPTAIN. Heard ye the wild huntsman?

FIRST WOMAN. He is passing over us now.

CAPTAIN. How the hounds give tongue! Wow! Wow!

SECOND MAN. How the whips crack!

THIRD MAN. And the huntsmen cheer them—Hallo
—ho!

MOTHER. 'Tis the devil's chase.

CAPTAIN. We have been fishing in troubled waters.
The peasants rob each other; there's no harm in our
helping them.

SECOND WOMAN. What hast thou got, Wolf?

WOLF. A hare and a capon, a spit, a bundle of linen,
three spoons and a bridle.

STICKS. I have a blanket and a pair of boots, also a
flint and tinder-box.

MOTHER. All wet as mire, I'll dry them, give them here!

[*Trampling without.*
CAPTAIN. Hark!—A horse! Go see who it is.

Enter GOETZ on horseback.

GOETZ. I thank thee, God! I see fire—they are gipsies.
—My wounds bleed sorely—my foes are close behind me!
—Great God, this is a fearful end!

CAPTAIN. Is it in peace thou comest?

GOETZ. I crave help from you—My wounds exhaust me—assist me to dismount!

CAPTAIN. Help him!—A gallant warrior in look and speech.

WOLF (*aside*). 'Tis Goetz von Berlichingen!

CAPTAIN. Welcome! welcome!—All that we have is yours.

GOETZ. Thanks, thanks!

CAPTAIN. Come to my hut! [*Exeunt to the hut.*

SCENE VII. *Inside the Hut.*

CAPTAIN, GIPSIES, and GOETZ.

CAPTAIN. Call our mother—tell her to bring blood-wort and bandages. (*GOETZ unarms himself.*) Here is my holiday doublet.

GOETZ. God reward you! [*The MOTHER binds his wounds.*

CAPTAIN. I rejoice that you are come.

GOETZ. Do you know me?

CAPTAIN. Who does not know you, Goetz? Our lives and heart's blood are yours.

Enter STICKS.

STICKS. Horsemen are coming through the wood. They are confederates.

CAPTAIN. Your pursuers! They shall not harm you. Away, Sticks, call the others: we know the passes better than they. We shall shoot them ere they are aware of us.

[*Exeunt CAPTAIN and MEN-GIPSIES with their guns.*

GOETZ (*alone*). O Emperor! Emperor! Robbers pro-

tect thy children, (*A sharp firing.*) The wild foresters!
Steady and true!

Enter WOMEN.

WOMEN. Flee, flee! The enemy has overpowered us.

GOETZ. Where is my horse?

WOMEN. Here!

GOETZ. (*Girds on his sword and mounts without his armour.*)
For the last time shall you feel my arm. I am not so weak
yet. [*Exit.—Tumult.*]

WOMEN. He gallops to join our party. [*Firing.*]

Enter WOLF.

WOLF. Away! Away! All is lost.—The Captain is
shot!—Goetz a prisoner.

[*The WOMEN scream and fly into the wood.*]

SCENE VIII. ADELAIDE'S Bed-chamber.

Enter ADELAIDE with a letter.

ADELAIDE. He or I! The tyrant—to threaten me!
We will anticipate him. Who glides through the ante-
chamber? (*A low knock at the door.*) Who is there?

FRANCIS (*in a low voice*). Open, gracious lady!

ADELAIDE. Francis! He well deserves that I should
admit him. [*Opens the door.*]

FRANCIS. (*Throws himself on her neck.*) My dear, my
gracious lady!

ADELAIDE. What audacity! If any one should hear
you?

FRANCIS. O—all—all are asleep.

ADELAIDE. What wouldst thou?

FRANCIS. I cannot rest. The threats of my master,—
your fate,—my heart.

ADELAIDE. He was incensed against me when you
parted from him?

FRANCIS. He was as I have never seen him.—To my
castle, said he, she must—she *shall* go.

ADELAIDE. And shall we obey?

FRANCIS. I know not, dear lady!

ADELAIDE. Thou foolish, infatuated boy? Thou dost

not see where this will end. Here he knows I am in safety. He has long had designs on my freedom, and therefore wishes to get me to his castle—there he will have power to use me as his hate shall dictate.

FRANCIS. He shall not!

ADELAIDE. Wilt thou prevent him?

FRANCIS. He shall not!

ADELAIDE. I foresee the whole misery of my fate. He will tear me forcibly from his castle to immure me in a cloister.

FRANCIS. Hell and damnation!

ADELAIDE. Wilt thou rescue me?

FRANCIS. Anything! Everything!

ADELAIDE. (*Throws herself weeping upon his neck.*)

Francis! O save me!

FRANCIS. He shall fall. I will plant my foot upon his neck.

ADELAIDE. No violence! You shall carry a submissive letter to him announcing obedience—Then give him this vial in his wine.

FRANCIS. Give it me! Thou shalt be free!

ADELAIDE. Free!—And then no more shalt thou need to come to my chamber trembling and in fear. No more shall I need anxiously to say, "Away, Francis! the morning dawns."

SCENE IX. *Street before the Prison at Heilbronn.*

ELIZABETH and LERSE.

LERSE. Heaven relieve your distress, gracious lady! Maria is come.

ELIZABETH. God be praised! Lerse, we have sunk into dreadful misery. My worst forebodings are realized! A prisoner—thrown as an assassin and malefactor into the deepest dungeon.

LERSE. I know all.

ELIZABETH. Thou knowest nothing. Our distress is too—too great! His age, his wounds, a slow fever—and, more than all, the despondency of his mind, to think that this should be his end.

LERSE. Ay, and that Weislingen should be commissioner!

ELIZABETH. Weislingen?

LERSE. They have acted with unheard-of severity. Metzler has been burnt alive—hundreds of his associates broken upon the wheel, beheaded, quartered, and impaled. All the country round looks like a slaughter-house, where human flesh is cheap.

ELIZABETH. Weislingen commissioner! O Heaven! a ray of hope! Maria shall go to him: he cannot refuse her. He had ever a compassionate heart, and when he sees her whom he once loved so much, whom he has made so miserable—Where is she?

LERSE. Still at the inn.

ELIZABETH. Take me to her. She must away instantly. I fear the worst.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE X. *An Apartment in Weislingen's Castle.*

WEISLINGEN, *alone.*

WEISLINGEN. I am so ill, so weak—all my bones are hollow—this wretched fever has consumed their very marrow. No rest, no sleep, by day or night! and when I slumber, such fearful dreams! Last night methought I met Goetz in the forest. He drew his sword, and defied me to combat. I grasped mine, but my hand failed me. He darted on me a look of contempt, sheathed his weapon, and passed on. He is a prisoner; yet I tremble to think of him. Miserable man! Thine own voice has condemned him; yet thou tremblest like a malefactor at his very shadow. And shall he die? Goetz! Goetz! we mortals are not our own masters. Fiends have empire over us, and shape our actions after their own hellish will, to goad us to perdition. (*Sits down.*) Weak! Weak! Why are my nails so blue? A cold, clammy, wasting sweat drenches every limb. Everything swims before my eyes. Could I but sleep! Alas!

Enter MARIA.

WEISLINGEN. Mother of God! Leave me in peace—leave me in peace! This spectre was yet wanting. Maria

is dead, and she appears to the traitor. Leave me, blessed spirit! I am wretched enough.

MARIA. Weislingen, I am no spirit. I am Maria.

WEISLINGEN. It is her voice!

MARIA. I came to beg my brother's life of thee. He is guiltless, however culpable he may appear.

WEISLINGEN. Hush! Maria—Angel of heaven as thou art, thou bringest with thee the torments of hell! Speak no more!

MARIA. And must my brother die? Weislingen, it is horrible that I should have to tell thee he is guiltless; that I should be compelled to come as a suppliant to restrain thee from a most fearful murder. Thy soul to its inmost depths is possessed by evil powers. Can this be Adelbert?

WEISLINGEN. Thou seest—the consuming breath of the grave hath swept over me—my strength sinks in death—I die in misery, and thou comest to drive me to despair—Could I but tell thee all, thy bitterest hate would melt to sorrow and compassion. Oh Maria! Maria!

MARIA. Weislingen, my brother is pining in a dungeon—The anguish of his wounds—his age—O hadst thou the heart to bring his grey hairs . . . Weislingen, we should despair.

WEISLINGEN. Enough!—

[Rings a hand-bell.

Enter FRANCIS, in great agitation.

FRANCIS. Gracious sir.

WEISLINGEN. Those papers, Francis. (*He gives them.*

WEISLINGEN *tears open a packet and shows MARIA a paper.*)

Here is thy brother's death-warrant signed!

MARIA. God in heaven!

WEISLINGEN. And thus I tear it. He shall live! But can I restore what I have destroyed? Weep not so, Francis! Dear youth, my wretchedness lies deeply at thy heart.

[FRANCIS *throws himself at his feet, and clasps his knees.*

MARIA (*apart*). He is ill—very ill. The sight of him rends my heart. I loved him! And now that I again approach him, I feel how dearly—

WEISLINGEN. Francis, arise and cease to weep—I may recover! While there is life, there is hope.

FRANCIS. You cannot! You must die!

WEISLINGEN. Must?

FRANCIS (*beside himself*). Poison! poison!—from your wife! I—I gave it. [*Rushes out.*]

WEISLINGEN. Follow him, Maria—he is desperate.

[*Exit MARIA.*]

Poison from my wife! Alas! alas! I feel it. Torture and death!

MARIA (*within*). Help! help!

WEISLINGEN. (*Attempts in vain to rise.*) God! I cannot.

MARIA (*re-entering*). He is gone! He threw himself desperately from a window of the hall into the river.

WEISLINGEN. It is well with him!—Thy brother is out of danger! The other commissioners, especially Seckendorf, are his friends. They will readily allow him to ward himself upon his knightly word. Farewell, Maria! Now go.

MARIA. I will stay with thee—thou poor forsaken one!

WEISLINGEN. Poor and forsaken indeed! O God, Thou art a terrible avenger! My wife!

MARIA. Remove from thee that thought. Turn thy soul to the throne of mercy.

WEISLINGEN. Go, thou gentle spirit! leave me to my misery! Horrible! Even thy presence, Maria, even the attendance of my only comforter, is agony.

MARIA (*aside*). Strengthen me, Heaven! My soul droops with his.

WEISLINGEN. Alas! alas! Poison from my wife! My Francis seduced by the wretch! She waits—listens to every horse's hoof for the messenger who brings her the news of my death. And thou too, Maria, wherefore art thou come to awaken every slumbering recollection of my sins? Leave me, leave me that I may die!

MARIA. Let me stay! Thou art alone: think I am thy nurse. Forget all. May God forgive thee as freely as I do!

WEISLINGEN. Thou spirit of love! pray for me! pray for me! My heart is seared.

MARIA. There is forgiveness for thee.—Thou art exhausted.

WEISLINGEN. I die! I die! and yet I cannot die. In the fearful contest between life and death lie the torments of hell.

MARIA. Heavenly Father, have compassion upon him. Grant him but one token of Thy love, that his heart may be opened to comfort, and his soul to the hope of eternal life, even in the agony of death!

SCENE XI. *A narrow Vault dimly illuminated. The Judges of the Secret Tribunal discovered seated, all muffled in black Cloaks.*

ELDEST JUDGE. Judges of the Secret Tribunal, sworn by the cord and the steel to be inflexible in justice, to judge in secret, and to avenge in secret, like the Deity! Are your hands clean and your hearts pure? Raise them to heaven, and cry,—Woe upon evil-doers!

ALL. Woe! woe!

ELDEST JUDGE. Crier, begin the diet of judgment.

CRIER. I cry, I cry for accusation against evil-doers! He whose heart is pure, whose hands are clean to swear by the cord and the steel, let him lift up his voice and call upon the steel and the cord for vengeance! vengeance! vengeance!

ACCUSER (*comes forward*). My heart is pure from misdeed, and my hands are clean from innocent blood: God pardon my sins of thought, and prevent their execution. I raise my hand on high, and cry for Vengeance! vengeance! vengeance!

ELDEST JUDGE. Vengeance upon whom?

ACCUSER. I call upon the cord and the steel for vengeance against Adelaide of Weislingen. She has committed adultery and murder. She has poisoned her husband by the hands of his servant—the servant hath slain himself—the husband is dead.

ELDEST JUDGE. Dost thou swear by the God of truth, that thy accusation is true?

ACCUSER. I swear!

ELDEST JUDGE. Dost thou invoke upon thine own head the punishment of murder and adultery, should thy accusation be found false?

ACCUSER. On my head be it.

ELDEST JUDGE. Your voices?

[*They converse a few minutes in whispers.*]

ACCUSER. Judges of the Secret Tribunal, what is your sentence upon Adelaide of Weislingen, accused of murder and adultery?

ELDEST JUDGE. She shall die!—she shall die a bitter and twofold death! By the double doom of the steel and the cord shall she expiate the double crime. Raise your hands to heaven and cry, Woe, woe upon her! Be she delivered into the hands of the avenger.

ALL. Woe! woe!

ELDEST JUDGE. Woe! Avenger, come forth.

[*A man advances.*]
Here, take thou the cord and the steel! Within eight days shalt thou blot her out from before the face of heaven: wheresoever thou findest her, down with her into the dust. Judges, ye that judge in secret and avenge in secret like the Deity, keep your hearts from wickedness, and your hands from innocent blood!

[*The Scene closes.*]

SCENE XII. *The Court of an Inn.*

LERSE and MARIA.

MARIA. The horses have rested long enough; we will away, Lerse.

LERSE. Stay till to-morrow; this is a dreadful night.

MARIA. Lerse, I cannot rest till I have seen my brother. Let us away: the weather is clearing up—we may expect a fair morning.

LERSE. Be it as you will.

SCENE XIII. *The Prison at Heilbronn.*

GOETZ and ELIZABETH.

ELIZABETH. I entreat thee, dear husband, speak to me. Thy silence alarms me; thy spirit consumes thee, pent up within thy breast. Come, let me see thy wounds; they mend daily. In this desponding melancholy I know thee no longer!

GOETZ. Seekest thou Goetz? He is long since gone! Piece by piece have they robbed me of all I held dear—my hand, my property, my freedom, my good name! My life! of what value is it to me? What news of George? Is Lerse gone to seek him?

ELIZABETH. He is, my love! Be of good cheer; things may yet take a favourable turn.

GOETZ. He whom God hath stricken lifts himself up no more! I best know the load I have to bear.—To misfortune I am inured.—But now it is not Weislingen alone, not the peasants alone, not the death of the emperor, nor my wounds—it is the whole united . . . My hour is come! I had hoped it should have been like my life. But His will be done!

ELIZABETH. Wilt thou not eat something?

GOETZ. Nothing, my love! See how the sun shines yonder!

ELIZABETH. It is a fine spring day!

GOETZ. My love, wilt thou ask the keeper's permission for me to walk in his little garden for half an hour, that I may look upon the clear face of heaven, the pure air, and the blessed sun?

ELIZABETH. I will—and he will readily grant it.

SCENE THE LAST. *The Prison Garden.*

LERSE and MARIA.

MARIA. Go in, and see how it stands with them.

[*Exit* LERSE.]

Enter ELIZABETH and KEEPER.

ELIZABETH (*to the KEEPER*). God reward your kindness and attention to my husband! (*Exit* KEEPER.) Maria, how hast thou sped?

MARIA. My brother is safe! But my heart is torn asunder. Weislingen is dead! poisoned by his wife. My husband is in danger—the princes are becoming too powerful for him: they say he is surrounded and besieged.

ELIZABETH. Believe not the rumour; and let not Goetz hear it.

MARIA. How is it with him?

ELIZABETH. I feared he would not survive till thy return: the hand of the Lord is heavy on him. And George is dead!

MARIA. George! The gallant boy!

ELIZABETH. When the miscreants were burning Miltenberg, his master sent him to check their villany. A body of cavalry charged upon them: Had they all behaved as George, they must all have had as clear a conscience. Many were killed, and George among them; he died the death of a warrior.

MARIA. Does Goetz know it?

ELIZABETH. We conceal it from him. He questions me ten times a-day concerning him, and sends me as often to see what is become of him. I fear to give his heart this last wound.

MARIA. O God! what are the hopes of this world?

Enter GOETZ, LERSE, and KEEPER.

GOETZ. Almighty God! how lovely it is beneath Thy heaven! How free! The trees put forth their buds, and all the world awakes to hope . . . Farewell, my children! my roots are cut away, my strength totters to the grave.

ELIZABETH. Shall I not send Lerse to the convent for thy son, that thou may'st once more see and bless him?

GOETZ. Let him be; he needs not my blessing, he is holier than I.—Upon our wedding-day, Elizabeth, could I have thought I should die thus!—My old father blessed us, and prayed for a succession of noble and gallant sons.—God, Thou hast not heard him. I am the last . . . Lerse, thy countenance cheers me in the hour of death, more than in our most daring fights: then, my spirit encouraged all of you; now, thine supports me . . . Oh that I could but once more see George, and sun myself in his look! You turn away and weep. He is dead? George is dead? Then die, Goetz! Thou hast outlived thyself, outlived the noblest of thy servants . . . How died he? Alas! they took him among the incendiaries, and he has been executed?

ELIZABETH. No! he was slain at Miltenberg! while fighting like a lion for his freedom.

GOETZ. God be praised! He was the kindest youth

under the sun, and one of the bravest . . . Now release my soul. My poor wife! I leave thee in a wicked world. Lerse, forsake her not! Lock your hearts more carefully than your doors. The age of fraud is at hand, treachery will reign unchecked. The worthless will gain the ascendancy by cunning, and the noble will fall into their net. Maria, may God restore thy husband to thee! may he not fall the deeper for having risen so high! Selbitz is dead, and the good emperor, and my George . . . Give me a draught of water! . . . Heavenly air! Freedom! freedom! *[He dies.]*

ELIZABETH. Freedom is above! above—with thee! The world is a prison-house.

MARIA. Noble man! Woe to this age that rejected thee!

LERSE. And woe to the future, that shall misjudge thee!

CLAVIGO,

A TRAGEDY IN FIVE ACTS.

Clavigo was written in 1774, a few months before the publication of *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, and a year after the appearance of *Goetz von Berlichingen*. It has always been popular in Germany, where it still holds a place on the stage; but it has not been translated into English before.

INTRODUCTION.

THE story on which Clavigo is founded is not only an authentic one, but the circumstances occurred only ten years before the publication of the play. They are as follows:—Beaumarchais (the well-known French writer) had two sisters living in Madrid, one married to an architect, the other, Marie, engaged to Clavigo, a young author without fortune. No sooner had Clavigo obtained an office which he had long solicited than he refused to fulfil his promise. Beaumarchais hurried to Madrid; his object was twofold; to save the reputation of his sister, and to put a little speculation of his own on foot. He sought Clavigo, and by his *sang-froid* and courage extorted from him a written avowal of his contemptible conduct. No sooner is this settled than Clavigo, alarmed at the consequences, solicits a reconciliation with Marie, offering to marry her. Beaumarchais consents, but just as the marriage is about to take place he learns that Clavigo is secretly conspiring against him, accusing him of having extorted the marriage by force, in consequence of which he has procured an order from the government to expel Beaumarchais from Madrid. Irritated at such villany Beaumarchais goes to the Ministers, reaches the King, and avenges himself by getting Clavigo dismissed from his post.

This story was published by Beaumarchais under the title of a 'Mémoire' in the year 1774; the circumstances

having occurred in 1764. Goethe once, at a friendly meeting, read the recently published *Mémoire*, and in the conversation that ensued promised to produce a play on the subject in the course of the following week. He fulfilled his promise, and it will be seen how closely, with the exception of the tragic dénouement, he adhered to the original story. The real Clavijo subsequently became a man of considerable eminence in Madrid, though Goethe could not have been aware of his existence when he wrote the play.*

It belongs to the period just after the composition of *Werther*, and is one of the less important of his literary works; but the exceedingly dramatic presentation of the incidents has given it great popularity on the German stage, and helped considerably to establish the fame of the author.

* The above details are derived from Mr. G. H. Lewes's 'Life of Goethe.'

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

CLAVIGO.

CARLOS, *his friend*.

BEAUMARCHAIS.

MARIE BEAUMARCHAIS.

SOPHIE GUILBERT (*née* BEAUMARCHAIS).

GUILBERT, *her husband*.

BUENCO.

ST. GEORGE.

The scene is at Madrid.

CLAVIGO

ACT I

SCENE I. *Clavigo's Dwelling.*

Enter CLAVIGO and CARLOS.

CLAVIGO (*rising up from the writing-table*). The journal will do a good work, it must charm all women. Tell me, Carlos, do you not think that my weekly periodical is now one of the first in Europe?

CARLOS. We Spaniards, at least, have no modern author who unites such great strength of thought, so much florid imagination, with so brilliant and easy a style.

CLAVIGO. Please don't. I must still be among the people the creator of the good style; people are ready to take all sorts of impressions; I have a reputation among my fellow-citizens, their confidence; and, between ourselves, my acquirements extend daily; my experience widens, and my style becomes ever truer and stronger.

CARLOS. Good, Clavigo! Yet, if you will not take it ill, your paper pleased me far better when you yet wrote it at Marie's feet, when the lovely cheerful creature had still an influence over you. I know not how, the whole had a more youthful blooming appearance.

CLAVIGO. Those were good times, Carlos, which are now gone. I gladly avow to thee, I wrote then with opener heart; and, it is true, she had a large share in the approbation which the public accorded me at the very beginning. But at length, Carlos, one becomes very soon weary of women; and were you not the first to applaud my resolution, when I determined to forsake her?

CARLOS. You would have become rusty. Women are far too monotonous. Only, it seems to me, it were again time that you cast about for a new plan, for it is all up when one is so entirely aground.

CLAVIGO. My plan is the Court; there there is no leisure nor holiday. For a stranger, who, without standing, without name, without fortune, came here, have I not already advanced far enough? Here in a Court! amid the throng of men, where it is not easy to attract attention? I do so rejoice, when I look on the road which I have left behind me. Loved by the first in the kingdom! Honoured for my attainments, my rank! Recorder of the King! Carlos, all that spurs me on; I were nothing if I remained what I am! Forward! forward! There it costs toil and art! One needs all his wits; and the women! the women! one loses far too much time with them.

CARLOS. Simpleton, that is your fault. I can never live without women, and they are not in my way at all. Moreover, I do not say so very many fine things to them, I do not amuse myself entire months with sentiment and such like; for I do not at all like to have to do with prudish girls. One has soon said his say with them: afterwards, should one pay them attention for a while, scarcely are they a little bit inflamed with one, than straightway—the deuce—you are pestered with thoughts of marriage and promises of marriage, which I fear as the plague. You are pensive, Clavigo?

CLAVIGO. I cannot get rid of the recollection that I jilted, deceived Marie, call it as you will.

CARLOS. Wonderful! It seems to me, however, that one lives only once in this world, has only once this power, these prospects, and he who does not make the most of them, and rise as high as possible, is a fool. And to marry! to marry just at the time when life is for the first time about to soar aloft on wide-spread pinions! to bury one's self in domestic repose, to shut one's self up when one has not traversed the half of his journey—has not yet achieved the half of his conquests! To love her was natural; to promise her marriage was folly, and if you had kept your word it would have been downright madness.

CLAVIGO. Hold! I do not understand men. I loved her truly, she drew me to her, she held me, and as I sat at her feet I vowed to her—I vowed to myself—that it should ever be so, that I would be hers as soon as I had an office, a position—and now, Carlos!

CARLOS. It will be quite time enough when you are a made man, when you have reached the desired goal, if then—to crown and confirm all your happiness—you seek to ally yourself by a prudent marriage with a family of wealth and consequence.

CLAVIGO. She has vanished! quite out of my heart vanished, and if her unhappiness does not sometimes remind me—strange that one is so changeable!

CARLOS. If one were constant I would wonder. Look, pray, does not everything in the world change? Why should our passions endure? Be tranquil; she is not the first jilted girl, nor the first that has consoled herself. If I were to advise you, there is the young widow over the way——

CLAVIGO. You know I do not set much store on such proposals. A love affair which does not come of its own accord has no charm for me.

CARLOS. So dainty people!

CLAVIGO. Be it so, and forget not that our chief work at present is, to render ourselves necessary to the new minister. That Whal resigns the government of India, is troublesome enough for us. In truth, otherwise it does not disquiet me; his influence abides—Grimaldi and he are friends, and we know how to talk and manœuvre.

CARLOS. And think and do what we will.

CLAVIGO. That is the grand point in the world. (*Rings for the servant*). Take this sheet to the printing-office.

CARLOS. Are you to be seen in the evening?

CLAVIGO. I do not think so. However, you can inquire.

CARLOS. This evening I should like to undertake something which gladdened my heart; all this afternoon I must write again, there is no end of it.

CLAVIGO. Have patience. If we did not toil for so many persons, we would not get the ascendancy over so many.

[*Exit.*]

SCENE II. *GUILBERT'S Dwelling.*

SOPHIE GUILBERT, MARIE, and DON BUENCO.

BUENCO. You have had a bad night?

SOPHIE. I told her so yesterday evening. She was so foolishly merry and prattled till eleven, then she was overheated, could not sleep, and now again she has no breath and weeps the whole morning.

MARIE. Strange that our brother comes not! It is two days past the time.

SOPHIE. Only have patience, he will not fail us.

MARIE (*rising up*). How anxious am I to see this brother, my avenger and my saviour. I scarcely remember him.

SOPHIE. Indeed! O, I can well picture him to myself; he was a fiery, open, brave boy of thirteen years, when our father sent us here.

MARIE. A noble great soul. You have read the letter which he wrote when he learnt my unhappiness; each letter of it is enshrined in my heart. "If you are guilty," writes he, "expect no forgiveness; over and above your misery the contempt of a brother will fall heavily upon you, and the curse of a father. If you are innocent, O, then, all vengeance, all, all glowing vengeance on the traitor!"—I tremble! He will come. I tremble, not for myself, I stand before God in my innocence! You must, my friends—I know not what I want! O, Clavigo!

SOPHIE. You will not listen! You will kill yourself.

MARIE. I will be still. Yes, I will not weep. It seems to me, however, I could have no more tears. And why tears? I am only sorry that I make my life bitter to you. For when all is said and done, what have I to complain of? I have had much joy as long as our old friend still lived. Clavigo's love has caused me much joy, perhaps more than mine for him. And now, what is it after all? of what importance am I? What matters it if a girl's heart is broken? What matters it whether she pines away and torments her poor young heart?

BUENCO. For God's sake, Mademoiselle!

MARIE. Whether it is all one to *him*—that he loves me no more? Ah! why am I not more amiable? But *he* should pity, at least pity me!—that the hapless girl, to whom he had made himself so needful, now without him should pine and weep her life away—Pity! I wish not to be pitied by this man.

SOPHIE. If I could teach you to despise him—the worthless, detestable man!

MARIE. No, sister, worthless he is not; and must I then despise him whom I hate? Hate! Indeed, sometimes I can hate him—sometimes, when the Spanish spirit possesses me. Lately, O! lately, when we met him, his look wrought full, warm love in me! And as I again came home, and his manner recurred to me, and the calm, cold glance that he cast over me, while beside the brilliant Donna; then I became a Spaniard in my heart, and seized my dagger and poison, and disguised myself. Are you amazed, Buenco? All in thought only, of course!

SOPHIE. Foolish girl!

MARIE. My imagination led me after him. I saw him as he lavished all the tenderness, all the gentleness on the feet of his new love—the charms with which he poisoned me—I aimed at the heart of the traitor! Ah! Buenco!—all at once the good-hearted French girl was again there, who knows of no love-sickness, and no daggers for revenge. We are badly off! Vaudevilles to entertain our lovers, fans to punish them, and, if they are faithless?—Say, sister, what do they do in France when lovers are faithless?

SOPHIE. They curse them.

MARIE. And—

SOPHIE. And let them go their ways.

MARIE. Go!—and why shall I not let Clavigo go? If that is the French fashion, why shall it not be so in Spain? Why shall a Frenchwoman not be a Frenchwoman in Spain? We will let him go and take to ourselves another; it appears to me they do so with us too.

BUENCO. He has broken a sacred promise, and no light love-affair, no friendly attachment. Mademoiselle, you are pained, hurt even to the depths of your heart. Oh! never was my position of an unknown, peaceful citizen of

Madrid so burdensome, so painful as at this moment, in which I feel myself so feeble, so powerless to obtain justice for you against the treacherous courtier!

MARIE. When he was still Clavigo, not yet Recorder of the King; when he was the stranger, the guest, the new-comer in our house, how amiable was he, how good! How all his ambition, all his desire to rise, seemed to be a child of his love! For me, he struggled for name, rank, fortune; he has all now, and I!—

GUILBERT *comes*.

GUILBERT (*privately to his wife*). Our brother is coming!

MARIE. My brother! (*She trembles; they conduct her to a seat.*) Where? where? Bring him to me! Take me to him!

BEAUMARCHAIS *comes*.

BEAUMARCHAIS. My sister! (*Quitting the eldest to rush towards the youngest.*) My sister! My friends! O my sister!

MARIE. Is it you indeed? God be thanked it is you!

BEAUMARCHAIS. Let me come to myself.

MARIE. My heart!—my poor heart!

SOPHIE. Be calm! Dear brother, I hoped to see you more tranquil.

BEAUMARCHAIS. More tranquil! Are you, then, tranquil? Do I not behold in the wasted figure of this dear one, in your tearful eyes, your sorrowful paleness, in the dead silence of your friends, that you are as wretched as I have imagined you to be during all the long way? and more wretched; for I see you, I hold you in my arms; your presence redoubles my sufferings. O my sister!

SOPHIE. And our father?

BEAUMARCHAIS. He blesses you, and me, if I save you.

BUENCO. Sir, permit one unknown who, at the first look, recognises in you a noble, brave man, to bear witness to the deep interest which all this matter inspires in me. Sir, you undertake this long journey to save, to avenge your sister! Welcome! be welcome as a guardian angel, though, at the same time, you put us all to the blush!

BEAUMARCHAIS. I hoped, sir, to find in Spain such

hearts as yours; that encouraged me to take this step. Nowhere, nowhere in the world are feeling, congenial souls wanting, if only one steps forward whose circumstances leave him full freedom to carry his courage through. And oh, my friends, I feel full of hope! Everywhere there are men of honour among the powerful and great, and the ear of Majesty is rarely deaf; only our voice is almost always too weak to reach to their height.

SOPHIE. Come, sister! come, rest a moment. She is quite beside herself. *(They lead her away.)*

MARIE. My brother!

BEAUMARCHAIS. God willing, if you are innocent, then all, all vengeance on the traitor! *(Exit MARIE and SOPHIE.)* My brother!—my friends!—I see it in your looks that you are so. Let me come to myself, and then!—a pure, impartial recital of the whole story. This must determine my actions. The feeling of a good cause shall confirm my courage; and, believe me, if we are right, we shall get justice.

ACT II.

SCENE I. CLAVIGO's House.

CLAVIGO. Who may these Frenchmen be, who have got themselves announced in my house? Frenchmen! In former days this nation was welcome to me! And why not now? It is singular that a man who sets so much at nought is yet bound with feeble thread to a single point. It is too much! And did I owe more to Marie than to myself? and is it a duty to make myself unhappy because a girl loves me?

A SERVANT.

SERVANT. The foreign gentlemen, sir.

CLAVIGO. Bid them enter. Pray, did you tell their servant that I expect them to breakfast?

SERVANT. As you ordered.

CLAVIGO. I shall be back presently.

Exit.

BEAUMARCHAIS, ST. GEORGE.

The SERVANT places chairs for them and withdraws.

BEAUMARCHAIS. I feel myself so much at ease; so content, my friend, to be at length here, to hold him; he shall not escape me. Be calm: at least show him a calm exterior. My sister! my sister! who could believe that you are as innocent as unhappy? It shall come to light; you shall be terribly avenged! And Thou, good God! preserve to me the tranquillity of soul which Thou accordedst to me at this moment, that, amid this frightful grief, I may act as prudently as possible and with all moderation.

ST. GEORGE. Yes; this wisdom—all, my friend, which you have ever shown of prudence—I claim here. Promise me, once more, dear friend, that you will reflect where you are. In a strange kingdom, where all your protectors, all your money cannot secure you from the secret machinations of worthless foes.

BEAUMARCHAIS. Be tranquil: play your part well; he shall not know with which of us he has to do. I will torture him! Oh! I am just in a fine humour to roast this fellow over a slow fire!

CLAVIGO returns.

CLAVIGO. Gentlemen, it gives me joy to see in my house men of a nation that I have always esteemed.

BEAUMARCHAIS. Sir, I wish that we, too, may be worthy of the honour which you are good enough to confer on our fellow countrymen.

ST. GEORGE. The pleasure of making your acquaintance has surmounted the fear of being troublesome to you.

CLAVIGO. Persons, whom the first look recommends, should not push modesty so far.

BEAUMARCHAIS. In truth it cannot be a novelty to you to be sought out by strangers; for, by the excellence of your writings, you have made yourself as much known in foreign lands as the important offices which his Majesty has entrusted to you distinguish you in your fatherland.

CLAVIGO. The King looks with much favour on my

humble services, and the public with much indulgence on the trifling essays of my pen; I have wished that I could contribute in some measure to the improvement of taste, to the propagation of the sciences in my country; for they only unite us with other nations, they only make friends of the most distant spirits, and maintain the sweetest union among those even, who, alas! are too often disunited through political interests.

BEAUMARCHAIS. It is captivating to hear a man so speak who has equal influence in the state and in letters. I must also avow you have taken the word out of my mouth and brought me straight to the purpose, on account of which you see me here. A society of learned worthy men has commissioned me, in every place through which I travel and find opportunity, to establish a correspondence between them and the best minds in the kingdom. As no Spaniard writes better than the author of the journal called the *Thinker*—a man with whom I have the honour to speak (CLAVIGO makes a polite bow), and who is an especial ornament of learned men, since he has known how to unite with his literary talents so great a capacity for political affairs, he cannot fail to climb the highest steps, of which his character and acquirements render him worthy. I believe I can perform no more acceptable service to my friends than to put them in connexion with a man of such merit.

CLAVIGO. No proposal in the world could be more agreeable to me, gentlemen; I thereby see fulfilled the sweetest hopes, with which my heart was often occupied without any prospect of their happy accomplishment. Not that I believe I shall be able, through my correspondence, to satisfy the wishes of your learned friends; my vanity does not go so far. But as I have the happiness to be in accordance with the best minds in Spain, as nothing can remain unknown to me which is achieved in our vast kingdom by isolated, often obscure, individuals for the Arts and Sciences, so I have looked upon myself, till now, as a kind of colporteur, who possesses the feeble merit of rendering the inventions of others generally useful; but now I become, through your intervention, a merchant, happy enough through the exportation of native

products to extend the renown of his fatherland and thereby to enrich it with foreign treasures. So then, allow me, sir, to treat as not a stranger a man who, with such frankness, brings such agreeable news; allow me to ask what business—what project made you undertake this long journey? It is not that I would, through this officiousness, gratify vain curiosity; no, believe rather that it is with the purest intention of exerting in your behalf all the resources, all the influence which I may perchance possess; for I tell you beforehand, you have come to a place where countless difficulties encounter a stranger in the prosecution of his business, especially at the Court.

BEAUMARCHAIS. I accept so obliging an offer with warmest thanks. I have no secrets with you, sir, and this friend at my statement will not be in the way; he is sufficiently acquainted with what I have to say. (CLAVIGO regards Sr. GEORGE with attention). A French merchant, with a large family and a limited fortune, had many business friends in Spain. One of the richest came fifteen years ago to Paris, and made him this proposal: "Give me two of your daughters, and I shall take them with me to Madrid and provide for them. I am an aged bachelor without relatives; they will form the happiness of my declining years, and after my decease I shall leave them one of the most considerable establishments in Spain. The eldest and one of the younger sisters were confided to his care. The father undertook to supply the house with all kinds of French merchandise which could be required, and so all went well, till the friend died without the least mention of the Frenchwomen in his will, who then saw themselves in the embarrassing position of superintending alone a new business. The eldest had meanwhile married, and notwithstanding their moderate fortune, they secured through their good conduct and varied accomplishments a multitude of friends, who were eager to extend their credit and business. (CLAVIGO becomes more and more attentive.) About the same time, a young man, a native of the Canary Islands, had got himself introduced into the family. (CLAVIGO'S countenance loses all cheerfulness, and his seriousness changes by and by into embarrassment, more

and more visible.) Despite his humble standing and fortune, they receive him kindly. The Frenchwomen, who remarked in him a great love of the French language, favoured him with every means of making rapid progress in its study. Extremely anxious to make himself known, he forms the design of giving to the city of Madrid the pleasure, hitherto unknown to Spain, of reading a weekly periodical in the style of the English *Spectator*. His lady friends fail not to aid him in every way; they do not doubt that such an undertaking would meet with great success; in short, animated by the hope of soon becoming a man of some consequence, he ventures to make an offer of marriage to the younger. Hopes are held out to him. "Try to make your fortune," says the elder, "and if an appointment, the favour of the Court, or any other means of subsistence shall have given you a right to think of my sister, if she still prefers you to other suitors, I cannot refuse you my consent." (CLAVIGO, covered with confusion, moves uneasily on his seat.) The younger declines several advantageous offers; her fondness for the man increases, and helps her to bear the anxiety of an uncertain expectation; she interests herself for his happiness as for her own, and encourages him to issue the first number of his periodical, which appears under an imposing title. (CLAVIGO is terribly embarrassed. BEAUMARCHAIS, icy cold). The journal is a great success; the King even, delighted with this charming production, gave the author public tokens of his favour. He was promised the first honourable office that might be vacant. From that moment he removed all rivals from his beloved, while quite openly striving hard to win her good graces. The marriage was delayed only in expectation of the promised situation. At last, after six years' patient waiting, unbroken friendship, aid, and love on the part of the girl; after six years' devotion, gratitude, attentions, solemn assurances on the part of the man, the office is forthcoming—and he vanishes. (CLAVIGO utters a deep sigh, which he tries to stifle, and is quite overcome.) The matter had made so great a noise in the world, that the issue could not be regarded with indifference. A house had been rented for two families. The whole town

was talking of it. The hearts of all friends were wrung and sought revenge. Application was made to powerful protectors; but the worthless fellow, already initiated in the cabals of the Court, knew how to render fruitless all their efforts, and went so far in his insolence as to dare to threaten the unhappy ladies; to dare to say in the very face of those friends, who had gone to find him, that the Frenchwomen should take care; he defied them to injure him, and if they made bold to undertake aught against him, it would be easy for him to ruin them in a foreign land, where they would be without protection and help. At this intelligence the poor girl fell into convulsions, which threatened death. In the depth of her grief, the elder wrote to France about the public outrage which had been done to them. The news most powerfully moves her brother; he demands leave of absence to obtain counsel and aid in so complicated an affair, he flies from Paris to Madrid, and the brother—it is I! who have left all—Fatherland, duties, family, standing, pleasures, in order to avenge, in Spain, an innocent, unhappy sister. I come, armed with the best cause and firm determination to unmask a traitor, to mark with bloody strokes his soul on his face, and the traitor—art thou!

CLAVIGO. Hear me, sir—I am—I have—I doubt not——

BEAUMARCHAIS. Interrupt me not. You have nothing to say to me and much to hear from me. Now, to make a beginning, have the goodness, in presence of this gentleman, who has come from France expressly with me, to declare: whether my sister has deserved this public outrage from you through any treachery, levity, weakness, rudeness, or any other blemish.

CLAVIGO. No, sir. Your sister, Donna Maria, is a lady overflowing with wit, amiability, and goodness.

BEAUMARCHAIS. Has she ever during your acquaintance given you any occasion to complain of her, or to esteem her less?

CLAVIGO. Never! never!

BEAUMARCHAIS (*rising up*). And why, monster, had you the barbarity to torture the girl to death? Only because her heart preferred you to ten others, all more honourable and richer than you?

CLAVIGO. Ah, sir! If you knew how I have been instigated; how I, through manifold advisers and circumstances—

BEAUMARCHAIS. Enough! (*to St. GEORGE*). You have heard the vindication of my sister; go and publish it. What I have further to say to the gentleman, needs no witnesses. (*CLAVIGO rises. St. GEORGE retires.*) Remain! remain! (*Both sit down again.*) Having now got so far, I shall make a proposal to you, which I hope you will accept. It is equally agreeable to you and me that you do not wed Marie, and you are deeply sensible that I have not come to play the part of a theatrical brother, who will unravel the drama, and present a husband to his sister. You have cast a slur upon an honourable lady in cold blood, because you supposed that in a foreign land she was without prop and avenger. Thus acts a base, worthless fellow. And so, first of all, testify with your own hand, spontaneously, with open doors, in presence of your servants, that you are an abominable man, who have deceived, betrayed, my sister without the least cause; and with this declaration I set out for Aranjuez, where our ambassador resides; I show it, I get it printed, and after to-morrow the Court and the town are flooded with it. I have powerful friends here, I have time and money, and of all shall I avail myself, to pursue you in the most furious manner possible, till the resentment of my sister is appeased and satisfied, and she herself says, "Stop."

CLAVIGO. I will not make such a declaration.

BEAUMARCHAIS. I believe that, for in your place neither perhaps would I do it. But here is the reverse of the medal. If you do not write it, I remain from this moment beside you, I quit you no more, I follow you everywhere, till you, disgusted with such society, have sought to get rid of me behind Buenretiro. If I am more fortunate than you, without seeing the ambassador, without speaking here with any one, I take my dying sister in my arms, place her in my carriage, and return to France with her. Should fate favour you, I am played out, and so you may have a laugh at our expense. Meanwhile, the breakfast. (*BEAUMARCHAIS rings the bell.*) An

ATTENDANT brings the chocolate. BEAUMARCHAIS takes a cup, and walks in the adjoining gallery, examining the pictures.)

CLAVIGO. Air! air! I have been surprised and seized like a boy. Where are you then, Clavigo? How will you end this? How can you end it? Frightful position, into which your folly, your treachery has plunged you! (*He seizes his sword on the table.*) Ha! short and good! (*Lays it down.*) And is there no way, no means, but death—or murder?—horrible murder! To deprive the hapless lady of her last solace, her only stay, her brother! To see gushing out the blood of a noble, brave man! And to draw upon yourself the double, insupportable curse of a ruined family! O, this was not the prospect when this amiable creature, even from your first meeting, attracted you with so many winsome ways! And when you abandoned her, did you not see the frightful consequences of your crime? What blessedness awaited you in her arms! in the friendship of such a brother! Marie! Marie! O that you could forgive! that at your feet I could atone for all by my tears!—And why not?—My heart overflows; my soul mounts up in hope! Sir!

BEAUMARCHAIS. What is your determination?

CLAVIGO. Hear me! My deceit towards your sister is unpardonable. Vanity has misled me. I feared by this marriage to ruin all my plans, all my projects for a world-wide celebrity. Could I have known that she had such a brother, she would have been in my eyes no unimportant stranger; I would have expected from our union very considerable advantages. You inspire me, sir, with the highest esteem, and in making me so keenly sensible of my errors, you impart to me a desire, a power, to make all good again. I throw myself at your feet! Help! help, if it is possible, to efface my guilt and put an end to unhappiness. Give your sister to me again, sir, give me to her! How happy were I to receive from your hand a wife and the forgiveness of all my faults!

BEAUMARCHAIS. It is too late! My sister loves you no more, and I detest you. Write the desired declaration, that is all that I exact from you, and leave me to provide for a choice revenge.

CLAVIGO. Your obstinacy is neither right nor prudent. I grant you that it does not depend on me, whether I will make good again so irremediable an evil. Whether I can make it good? That rests with the heart of your excellent sister whether she may again look upon a wretch who does not deserve to see the light of day. Only it is your duty to ascertain that and to conduct yourself accordingly, if your demeanour is not to resemble the inconsiderate passion of a young man. If Donna Maria is immovable. O, I know her heart! O, her good, her heavenly soul hovers before me quite vividly! If she is inexorable, then it is time, sir.

BEAUMARCHAIS. I insist on the vindication.

CLAVIGO (*approaching the table*). And if I seize the sword?

BEAUMARCHAIS (*advancing*). Good, sir! Excellent, sir!

CLAVIGO (*holding him back*). One word more! You have the better case; let me have prudence for you. Consider what you are doing. Whether you or I fall, we are irrecoverably lost. Should I not die of pain, of remorse, if your blood should stain my sword, if I, to complete her wretchedness, bereft her of her brother; and on the other hand—the murderer of Clavigo would not recross the Pyrenees.

BEAUMARCHAIS. The vindication, sir, the vindication!

CLAVIGO. Well! be it so. I will do all to convince you of the upright feeling with which your presence inspires me. I will write the vindication, I will write it at your dictation. Only promise me not to make use of it, till I am able to convince Donna Maria of the change and repentance of my heart, till I have spoken to her elder sister; till she has put in a good word for me with my beloved one. Not before, sir.

BEAUMARCHAIS. I am going to Aranjuez.

CLAVIGO. Well then, till your return, let the vindication remain in your portfolio; if I have not been forgiven, then let your vengeance have full swing. This proposal is just, fair, and prudent; and if you do not agree to it, let us then play the game of life and death. And whichever of us two become the victim of his own rashness, you and your poor sister will suffer in any case.

BEAUMARCHAIS. It becomes you to pity those whom you have made wretched.

CLAVIGO (*sitting down*). Are you satisfied?

BEAUMARCHAIS. Well, then, I yield the point. But not a moment longer. I come from Aranjuez, I ask, I hear! And if they have not forgiven you, which is what I hope and desire, I am off directly with the paper to the printing-office.

CLAVIGO (*takes paper*). How do you demand it?

BEAUMARCHAIS. Sir! in presence of your attendants.

CLAVIGO. Why?

BEAUMARCHAIS. Command only that they are present in the adjoining gallery. It shall not be said that I have constrained you.

CLAVIGO. What scruples!

BEAUMARCHAIS. I am in Spain and have to deal with you.

CLAVIGO. Now then! (*Rings. A SERVANT.*) Call my attendants together, and betake yourselves to the gallery there. (*The SERVANT retires. The rest come and occupy the gallery.*) You allow me to write the vindication?

BEAUMARCHAIS. No, sir! Write it, I beg you; write it, as I dictate it to you. (*CLAVIGO writes.*) "I, the undersigned, Joseph Clavigo, Recorder of the King"——

CLAVIGO. "Of the King."

BEAUMARCHAIS. "Acknowledge that after I was received into the family of Madame Guilbert as a friend"——

CLAVIGO. "As a friend."

BEAUMARCHAIS. "I made her sister, Mademoiselle de Beaumarchais, a promise of marriage, repeated many times, which I have unscrupulously broken." Have you written it?——

CLAVIGO. My dear sir!

BEAUMARCHAIS. Have you another expression for it?

CLAVIGO. I should think——

BEAUMARCHAIS. "Unscrupulously broken." What you have done you need not hesitate to write.—"I have abandoned her, without any fault or weakness on her part having suggested a pretext or an excuse for this perfidy."

CLAVIGO. Come!

BEAUMARCHAIS. "On the contrary, the demeanour of the lady has been always pure, blameless, and worthy of all honour."

CLAVIGO.—“Worthy of all honour.”

BEAUMARCHAIS. “I confess that, through my deceit, the levity of my conversations, the construction of which they were susceptible, I have publicly humiliated this virtuous lady; and on this account I entreat her forgiveness, although I do not regard myself as worthy of receiving it.” (CLAVIGO stops.) Write! write! “And this testimony of my own free will, and unforced, I have given, with this especial promise, that if this satisfaction should not please the injured lady, I am ready to afford it in every other way required. Madrid.”

CLAVIGO (*rises, beckons to the servants to withdraw, and hands him the paper*). I have to do with an injured, but a noble man. You will keep your word, and put off your vengeance. Only on this consideration, in this hope, I have granted you the shameful document, to which nothing else would have reduced me. But before I venture to appear before Donna Maria, I have resolved to engage some one to put in a word for me, to speak in my behalf—and you are the man.

BEAUMARCHAIS. Do not reckon on that.

CLAVIGO. At least make her aware of the bitter heartfelt repentance which you have seen in me. That is all, all, that I beg of you; do not deny me this; I should have to choose another less powerful intercessor, and even you owe her anyhow a faithful account. Do tell her how you have found me!

BEAUMARCHAIS. Well! this I can do, this I shall do. Good bye, then.

CLAVIGO. Farewell! (*He wishes to take his hand; BEAUMARCHAIS draws it back.*)

CLAVIGO (*alone*). So unexpectedly from one position into the other. It is an infatuation, a dream!—I should not have given this vindication.—It came so quickly, so suddenly, like a thunder-storm!

CARLOS *enters*.

CARLOS. What visit is this you have had? The whole house is astir. What is the matter?

CLAVIGO. Marie's brother.

CARLOS. I suspected it. This old dog of a servant, who

was formerly with Guilbert, and who at present acts the spy for me, knew yesterday that he was expected, and found me only this moment. He was here then?

CLAVIGO. An excellent young man.

CARLOS. Of whom we shall soon be rid. Already I have spread nets on his way!—What, then, was the matter? A challenge? An apology? Was he very hot, the fellow?

CLAVIGO. He demanded a declaration, that his sister gave me no occasion for the change in my feelings towards her.

CARLOS. And have you granted it?

CLAVIGO. I thought it was best.

CARLOS. Well, very well! Was that all?

CLAVIGO. He insisted on a duel or the vindication.

CARLOS. The last was the most judicious. Who will risk his life for a boy so romantic? And did he exact the paper with violence?

CLAVIGO. He dictated it to me, and I had to call the servants into the gallery.

CARLOS. I understand! ah! now I have you, little Master! That will prove his ruin. Call me a scrivener, if I have not in two days the varlet in prison and off for India by the next transport.

CLAVIGO. No, Carlos. The matter stands otherwise than as you think.

CARLOS. How?

CLAVIGO. I hope through his intervention, through my earnest endeavours, to obtain forgiveness from the unhappy lady.

CARLOS. Clavigo!

CLAVIGO. I hope to efface all the past, to heal the breach, and so in my own eyes and in the eyes of the world again to become an honourable man.

CARLOS. The devil! Have you become childish? One can still detect the bookworm in you.—To let yourself be so befooled! Do you not see that that is a stupidly laid plan to entrap you?

CLAVIGO. No, Carlos, he does not wish marriage; they are even opposed to it; she will not listen to aught from me.

CARLOS. That is the very point. No, my good friend,

take it not ill; I may, perhaps, in plays have seen a country squire thus cheated.

CLAVIGO. You pain me. I beg you will reserve your humour for my wedding. I have resolved to marry Marie, of my own accord, from the impulse of my heart. All my hope, all my felicity, rests on the thought of procuring her forgiveness. And then away, Pride! Heaven still lies, as before, in the breast of this loved one. All the fame which I acquire, all the greatness to which I rise will fill me with double joy, for it is shared by the lady who makes me twice a man. Farewell! I must hence. I must at least speak with Guilbert.

CARLOS. Wait only till after dinner.

CLAVIGO. Not a moment.

CARLOS (*looking after him after a moment's silence*). [*Exit.*] There is some one going to burn his fingers again!

ACT III.

SCENE I. GUILBERT'S *abode*.

SOPHIE GUILBERT, MARIE, BEAUMARCHAIS.

MARIE. You have seen him? All my limbs tremble! You have seen him? I had almost fainted when I heard he was come; and you have seen him? No, I can—I will—no—I can never see him again.

SOPHIE. I was beside myself when he stepped in. For ah! did I not love him as you, with the fullest, purest, most sisterly love? Has not his estrangement grieved, tortured me? And now, the returning, the repentant one, at my feet! Sister, there is something so charming in his look, in the tone of his voice. He——

MARIE. Never, never more!

SOPHIE. He is the same as ever; has still that good, soft, feeling heart; still even that impetuosity of passion. There is still even the desire to be loved, and the excruciatingly painful torture when love is denied him. All! all! and of thee he speaks, Marie! as in those happy

days of the most ardent passion. It is, as if your good genius had even brought about this interval of infidelity and separation, to break the uniformity and tediousness of a prolonged attachment, and impart to the feeling a fresh vivacity.

MARIE. Do you speak a word for him?

SOPHIE. No, sister. Nor have I promised to do so. Only, dearest, I see things as they are. You and your brother see them in a light far too romantic. You have this experience in common with many a very good girl, that your lover became faithless and forsook you. And that he comes again penitent, will amend his fault, revive all old hopes—that is a happiness which another would not lightly reject.

MARIE. My heart would break!

SOPHIE. I believe you. The first moment must make a sensible impression on you—and then, my dear, I beseech you, regard not this anxiety, this embarrassment, which seems to overpower all your senses, as a result of hatred and ill-will. Your heart speaks more for him than you suppose, and even on that account you do not trust yourself to see him, because you so anxiously desire his return.

MARIE. Spare me, dearest!

SOPHIE. You should be happy. Did I feel that you despised him, that he was indifferent to you, I would not say another word, he should see my face no more. Yet, as it is, my love, you will thank me that I have helped you to overcome this painful irresolution, which is a token of the deepest love.

GUILBERT, BUENCO.

SOPHIE. Come, Buenco! Guilbert, come! Help me to give this darling courage, resolution, now while we may

BUENCO. Would that I dared say—Receive him again.

SOPHIE. Buenco!

BUENCO. The thought makes my blood boil—that he should still possess this angel, whom he has so shamefully injured, whom he has dragged to the grave. He—possess her? Why? How does he repair all that he has violated? He returns; once more it pleases him to return and say: "Now I may; now I will," just as if this excellent soul

were suspected wares, which one after all tosses to the buyer, when he has already tormented you to the marrow by the meanest offers, and haggling like a Jew. No, my voice he will never obtain, not even if the heart of Marie herself should speak for him. To return; and why, then, now?—now?—Must he wait till a valiant brother come, whose vengeance he must fear, and, like a schoolboy, come and crave pardon? Ha! he is as cowardly as he is worthless.

GUILBERT. You speak like a Spaniard, and as if you did not know Spaniards. This moment we are in greater danger than you are aware of.

MARIE. Good Guilbert!

GUILBERT. I honour our brother's bold soul. In silence I have observed his heroic conduct. That all may turn out well, I wish that Marie could resolve to give Clavigo her hand; for—(*smiling*)—her heart he has still.

MARIE. You are cruel.

SOPHIE. Listen to him, I beseech you, listen to him!

GUILBERT. Your brother has wrung from him a declaration, which will vindicate you in the eyes of the world, and ruin us.

BUENCO. How?

MARIE. O God!

GUILBERT. He gave it in the hope of touching your heart. If you remain unmoved, then he must with might and main destroy the paper. This he can do; this he will do. Your brother will print and publish it immediately after his return from Aranjuez. I fear, if you persist, he will not return.

SOPHIE. My dear Guilbert!

MARIE. It is killing me!

GUILBERT. Clavigo cannot let the paper be published. If you reject his offer and he is a man of honour, he goes to meet your brother, and one of them falls; and whether your brother perish or triumph he is lost. A stranger in Spain! The murderer of this beloved courtier! My sister, it is all very well to think and feel nobly, but to ruin yourself and yours—

MARIE. Advise me, Sophie; help me!

GUILBERT. And Buenco, contradict me, if you can.

BUENCO. He dares not; he fears for his life; otherwise he would not have written at all; he would not have offered Marie his hand.

GUILBERT. So much the worse. He will get a hundred to lend him their arm; a hundred to take away our brother's life on the way. Ha! Buenco, are you then so young? Should not a courtier have assassins in his pay?

BUENCO. The King is great and good.

GUILBERT. Go then, traverse the walls which surround him, the guards, the ceremonial, and all that his courtiers have put between his people and him; press through and save us. Who comes?

CLAVIGO *appears.*

CLAVIGO. I must! I must!

(*MARIE utters a shriek, and falls into SOPHIE's arms.*)

SOPHIE. Cruel man, in what a position you place us!

(*GUILBERT and BUENCO draw near to her.*)

CLAVIGO. Yes, it is she! it is she! and I am Clavigo! Listen to me, gentle Marie, if you will not look on me. At the time that Guilbert received me as a friend into his house, when I was a poor unknown youth, and when in my heart I felt for you an overpowering passion, was that any merit in me? or was it not rather an inner harmony of characters, a secret union of soul, so that you too could not remain unmoved by me, and I could flatter myself with the sole possession of this heart? And now—am I not even the same? Are you not even the same? Why should I not venture to hope? Why not entreat? Would you not once more take to your bosom a friend, a lover, whom you had long believed lost, if after a perilous, hapless voyage he returned unexpectedly and laid his preserved life at your feet? And have I not also tossed upon a raging sea? Are not our passions, with which we live in perpetual strife, more terrible and indomitable than those waves, which drive the unfortunate far from his fatherland? Marie! Marie! How can you hate me, when I have never ceased to love you? Amid all infatuation, and in the lap of all the enchanting seductions of vanity and pride, I have ever remembered those happy days of liberty, which I spent at your feet in

sweet retirement, as we saw lie before us a succession of blooming prospects.—And now, why would you not realise with me all that we hoped? Will you now not enjoy the happiness of life, because a gloomy interval has deferred our hopes? No, my love, believe that the best friends in the world are not quite pure; the highest joy is also interrupted through our passions, through fate. Shall we complain that it has happened to us, as to all others, and shall we chastise ourselves in casting away this opportunity of repairing the past, of consoling a ruined family, of rewarding the heroic deed of a noble brother, and of establishing our own happiness for ever? My friends! from whom I deserve nothing; my friends, who must be so, because they are the friends of virtue, to which I return, unite your entreaties with mine, Marie! (*He falls on his knees.*) Marie! Do you recognise my voice no more? Do you no more feel the pulse of my heart? Is it so? Marie! Marie!

MARIE. O Clavigo!

CLAVIGO (*leaps up and kisses her hand with transport*). She forgives me! She loves me! (*He embraces GUILBERT and BUENCO.*) She loves me still! O Marie, my heart told me so! I might have thrown myself at your feet, silently, uttered with tears my anguish, my penitence; without words you would have understood me, without words I would have received my forgiveness. No, this intimate union of our souls is not destroyed; no, still they understand each other as in the olden time, in which no sound, no sign was needful to impart our deepest emotions. Marie! Marie! Marie!

BEAUMARCHAIS *advances.*

BEAUMARCHAIS. Ha!

CLAVIGO (*rushing towards him*). My brother!

BEAUMARCHAIS. Do you forgive him?

MARIE. No more, no more! my senses abandon me.

(*They lead her away.*)

BEAUMARCHAIS. Has she forgiven him?

BUENCO. It seems so.

BEAUMARCHAIS. You do not deserve your happiness.

CLAVIGO. Believe that I feel it.

SOPHIE (*returns*). She forgives him. A stream of tears broke from her eyes. He should withdraw, said she sobbing, till I recover! I forgive him.—“Ah, my sister!” she exclaimed, and fell upon my neck, “whence knows he that I love him so?”

CLAVIGO (*kissing her hand*). I am the happiest man under the sun. My brother!

BEAUMARCHAIS (*embraces him*). With all my heart then. Although I must tell you: even yet I cannot be your friend, even yet I cannot love you. So now you are one of us, and let all be forgotten. The paper you gave me—here it is. (*He takes it from his portfolio, tears it, and gives it to him.*)

CLAVIGO. I am yours, ever yours.

SOPHIE. I beseech you to retire, that she may not hear your voice, that she may rest.

CLAVIGO (*embracing them in turn*). Farewell! Farewell! A thousand kisses to the angel. [*Exit.*]

BEAUMARCHAIS. After all, it may be for the best, although I should have preferred it otherwise (*smiling*). A girl is a good-natured creature, I must say—and, my friends, I should tell you, too, it was truly the thought, the wish of our ambassador, that Marie should forgive him, and that a happy marriage might end this sad story.

GUILBERT. I too am taking heart again.

BUENCO. He is your brother-in-law, and so, good bye! You shall see me in your house no more.

BEAUMARCHAIS. Sir!

GUILBERT. Buenco!

BUENCO. I hate him now and always shall to the day of judgment. And take care with what kind of a man you have to do. [*Exit.*]

GUILBERT. He is a melancholy bird of ill omen. But yet in time he will be persuaded, when he sees that all goes well.

BEAUMARCHAIS. Yet it was hasty to return him the paper.

GUILBERT. No more! no more! no visionary cares.

[*Exit.*]

ACT IV.

SCENE I. CLAVIGO's *abcde*. CARLOS, *alone*.

CARLOS. It is praiseworthy to place under guardianship a man, who, by his dissipation or other follies, shows that his reason is deranged. If the magistrate does that, who otherwise does not much concern himself about us, why should not we do it for a friend? Clavigo, you are in a bad position; but there is still hope. And provided that you retain a little of your former docility, there is time yet to keep you from a folly which, with your lively and sensitive character, will cause the misery of your life, and lead you to an untimely grave. He comes.

CLAVIGO (*thoughtful*).

Good day, Carlos.

CARLOS. A very sad, dull . . . Good day! Is that the mood in which you come from your bride?

CLAVIGO. She is an angel! They are excellent people!

CARLOS. You will not so hasten with the wedding that we cannot get an embroidered dress for the occasion?

CLAVIGO. Jest or earnest, at our wedding no embroidered dresses will make a parade.

CARLOS. I believe it indeed.

CLAVIGO. Pleasure in each other's society, friendly harmony shall constitute the splendour of this festival.

CARLOS. You will have a quiet little wedding.

CLAVIGO. As those who feel that their happiness rests entirely with themselves.

CARLOS. In those circumstances it is very proper.

CLAVIGO. Circumstances! What do you mean by "those circumstances"?

CARLOS. As the matter now stands and remains.

CLAVIGO. Listen, Carlos, I cannot bear a tone of reserve between friends. I know you are not in favour of this marriage; notwithstanding, if you have aught to say against it, you may say it; come, out with it. How then does the matter stand? how goes it?

CARLOS. More unexpected, strange things happen to one in life, and it were not well if all went quite smoothly.

One would have nothing to wonder at, nothing to whisper in the ear, nothing to pull to pieces in society.

CLAVIGO. It will make some stir.

CARLOS. Clavigo's wedding! that is clear of course. How many a girl in Madrid waits patiently for thee, hopes for thee, and if you now play them this trick?

CLAVIGO. That cannot be helped now.

CARLOS. 'Tis strange, I have known few men who make so great and general an impression on women as you. In all ranks there are good girls who occupy their time with plans and projects to become yours. One relies on her beauty, another on her riches, another on her rank, another on her wit, and another on her connections. What compliments have been paid to me on your account! For, indeed, neither my flat nose, nor crisp hair, nor my known contempt for women can bring me such good luck.

CLAVIGO. You mock.

CARLOS. As if I have not already had in my hands declarations, offers, written with their own white fond little fingers, as badly spelt as an original love-letter of a girl can only be! How many pretty duennas have come under my thumb on this account!

CLAVIGO. And you did not say a word of all this?

CARLOS. I did not wish to trouble you with mere trifles, and I could not have advised you to take any such matter seriously. O Clavigo, my heart has watched over your fate as over my own! I have no other friend but you; all men are not to be tolerated and you even begin to be unbearable.

CLAVIGO. I entreat you, be calm.

CARLOS. Burn the house of a man who has taken ten years to build it, and then send him a confessor to recommend Christian patience! A man ought to look out for no one but himself; people do not deserve——

CLAVIGO. Are your misanthropic visions returning?

CARLOS. If I harp anew on that string, who is to blame but you? I said to myself: What would avail him at present the most advantageous marriage? him, who for an ordinary man has doubtless advanced far enough? But with his genius, with his gifts, it is not probable, it is not possible that he can remain stationary. I concerted

my plans. There are so few men at once so enterprising and so supple, so highly gifted and so diligent. He is well qualified in all departments. As Recorder, he can rapidly acquire the most important knowledge; he will make himself necessary; and should a change take place, he becomes minister.

CLAVIGO. I avow it. Often, too, were these my dreams.

CARLOS. Dreams! As surely as I should succeed in reaching the top of a tower, if I set off with the firm determination not to yield till I had carried my point, so surely would you have overcome all obstacles; and afterwards the rest would have given me no disquietude. You have no fortune from your family, so much the better! You would have become more zealous to acquire, more attentive to preserve. Besides, he who sits at the receipt of custom without enriching himself is a great fool; and I do not see why the country does not owe taxes to the minister as well as to the king. The latter gives his name, and the former the power. When I had arranged all that, I then sought out a fit match for you. I saw many a proud family which would have shut their eyes to your origin, many of the richest, who would have gladly supported you in the maintenance of your rank, to share the dignity of the second king—and now——

CLAVIGO. You are unjust, you lower my actual condition too much; and do you fancy then that I cannot rise higher, and make still further advances?

CARLOS. My dear friend, if you lop off the heart of a young plant, in vain will it afterwards and incessantly put forth countless shoots; it will form, perhaps, a large bush, but it is all over with the kingly attempt of its first growth. And think not that at the court this marriage is regarded with indifference. Have you forgotten what sort of men disapproved your attachment, your union with Marie? Have you forgotten who inspired you with the wise thought of abandoning her? Must I count them all on my fingers?

CLAVIGO. This thought has already distressed me; yes, few will approve this step.

CARLOS. Nobody; and will not your powerful friends be indignant that you, without asking their leave, with-

out consulting them, should have so hastily sacrificed yourself like a thoughtless child, who throws away his money in the market on worm-eaten nuts?

CLAVIGO. That is impolite, Carlos, and exaggerated.

CARLOS. Not at all. Let one commit an egregious error through passion, I allow it. To marry a chambermaid because she is as beautiful as an angel! Well, the man is blamed, and yet people envy him.

CLAVIGO. People, always the people!

CARLOS. You know I do not inquire very curiously after the success of others; but it is ever true that he who does nothing for others does nothing for himself; and if men do not wonder at or envy you, you too are not happy.

CLAVIGO. The world judges by appearances. Oh! he who possesses Marie's heart is to be envied.

CARLOS. Things appear what they are; but, frankly, I have always thought that there were hidden qualities that render your happiness enviable; for what one sees with his eyes and can comprehend with his understanding—

CLAVIGO. You wish to make me desperate.

CARLOS. "How has that happened?" they will ask in the town. "How has that happened?" they will ask in the court. "But, good God! how has that happened? She is poor, without position. If Clavigo had not had an intrigue with her one would not have known that she was in the world; she is said to be well bred, agreeable, witty!" But who takes to himself a wife for that? That passes away in the first years of marriage. "Ah!" says some one, she must be beautiful, charmingly, ravishingly beautiful." "That explains the matter," says another.

CLAVIGO (*troubled, lets a deep sigh escape*). Alas!

CARLOS. "Beautiful? O," says one lady, "very good! I have not seen her for six years." "She may well be altered," says another. "One must, however, see her, he will soon take her out," says a third. People ask, look, are eager, wait, and are impatient; they recall the ever-proud Clavigo, who never let himself be seen in public, without leading out in triumph a stately, splendid, haughty Spanish lady, whose full breast, blooming cheeks, unpassioned eyes—all, all seemed to ask the world en-

circling her: "Am I not worthy of my companion?" and who in her pride lets flaunt so widely in the breeze the train of her silken robe, to render her appearance more imposing and remarkable.—And now appears the gentleman—and surprise renders the people dumb—he comes accompanied by his tripping little Frenchwoman, whose hollow eyes, whose whole appearance announces consumption, in spite of the red and white, with which she has daubed her death-pale countenance. Yes, brother! I become frantic, I run away, when people stop me now and ask, and question, and say they cannot understand——

CLAVIGO (*seizing his hand*). My friend, my brother, I am in a frightful position. I tell you, I avow I was horror-struck, when I saw Marie again. How changed she is!—how pale and exhausted! Oh! it is my fault, my treacheries!——

CARLOS. Follies! visions! She was in consumption when the romance of your love was still unfolding. I told you a thousand times, and . . . But you lovers have your eyes, nay, all your senses closed. Clavigo, it is a shame. All, yes, all to forget thus! A sick wife, who will plague all your posterity, so that all your children and grandchildren will in a few years be politely extinguished, like the sorry lamp of a beggar.—A man who could have been the founder of a family, which perhaps in future . . . Ah! I am becoming a fool, my reason fails me.

CLAVIGO. Carlos, what shall I say to thee? When I saw her again, in the first transport, my heart went out towards her; and alas! when that was gone, compassion—a deep, heartfelt pity was breathed into me: but love . . . Lo! in the warm fullness of joy, I seemed to feel on my neck the cold hand of death. I strove to be cheerful; to play the part of a happy man again, in presence of those who surrounded me: it was all gone, all so stiff, so painfully anxious! Had they not somewhat lost their self-possession, they would have remarked it.

CARLOS. Hell! death and devil! and you are going to marry her! (CLAVIGO *remains absorbed, without giving any answer*.) It is all over with thee; lost for ever. Farewell, brother, and let me forget all; let me, all the rest of my solitary life, furiously curse your fatal blindness. Ah!

to sacrifice all, to render oneself despicable in the eyes of the world, and not even then satisfy thereby a passion, a desire! To contract a malady, voluntarily which, while undermining your inmost strength, will make you hideous in the eyes of men!

CLAVIGO. Carlos! Carlos!

CARLOS. Would that you had never been elevated, at least you would never have fallen! With what eyes will they look on all this! "There is the brother," they will say; "he must be a lad of spirit; he has put to the last shift Clavigo, who dared not draw the sword." "Ah!" our flaunting courtizans will say, "One saw all along that he was not a gentleman." "Ah, ah!" exclaims another, while drawing his hat over his eyes, "the Frenchman should have come to me!" And he claps himself on the paunch—a fellow, who perhaps were not worthy of being your groom!

CLAVIGO (*expresses the most acute distress, and falls into the arms of CARLOS amid a torrent of tears*). Save me! My friend! my best friend, save me! Save me from a double perjury! from an unutterable disgrace, from myself. I am done for!

CARLOS. Poor, hapless one! I hoped that these youthful furies, these stormy tears, this absorbing melancholy would have been gone; I hoped to behold you, as a man, agitated no more, no more plunged in that overwhelming sorrow, which in other days you so often uttered on my breast with tears. Be a man, Clavigo, quit yourself like a man!

CLAVIGO. Let me weep! (*Throws himself into a chair.*)

CARLOS. Alas for you, that you have entered on a career which you will not pursue to the end! With your heart, with your sentiments, which would make a tranquil citizen happy, you must unite this unhappy hankering after greatness! And what is greatness, Clavigo? To raise oneself above others in rank and consequence? Believe it not. If your heart is not greater than that of others; if you are not able to place yourself calmly above the circumstances which would embarrass an ordinary man, then with all your ribbons, all your stars, even with the crown itself, you are but an ordinary man. Take heart, compose your mind! (CLAVIGO rises, looks on CARLOS, and

holds out his hand, which CARLOS eagerly seizes.) Come, come, my friend! make up your mind. Look, I will put everything aside, and will say to you: Here lie two proposals on equal scales; either you marry Marie and find your happiness in a quiet citizen-like life, in tranquil homely joys; or you bend your steps along the path of honour to a near goal.—I will put all aside, and say: The beam of the balance is in equilibrium; your decision will settle which of the two scales will carry the day! Good! But decide! There is nothing in the world so pitiable as an undecided man, who wavers between two feelings, hoping to reconcile them, and does not understand that nothing can unite them except the doubt, the disquietude, which rack him. Go, and give Marie your hand, act as an honourable man, who, to keep his word, sacrifices the happiness of his life, who regards it as a duty to repair the wrong he has committed; but who, too, has never extended the sphere of his passions and activity, further than to be in a position to repair the wrong he has committed; and thus enjoy the happiness of a tranquil retirement, the approval of a peaceful conscience, and all the blessedness belonging to those who are able to create their own happiness and provide the joy of their families. Decide, and then shall I say—You are every inch a man.

CLAVIGO. Carlos! O for a spark of your strength—of your courage!

CARLOS. It slumbers in thee, and I will blow till it give vent to flames. Behold on the one side the fortune and the greatness which await you. I shall not set off this future with the variegated hues of poetry; represent it to yourself with such vivacity as it clearly appeared before your mind, till the hot-headed Frenchman made you lose your wits. But there too, Clavigo, be a man thoroughly, and take your way straight, without looking to the right or left. May your soul expand, and this great idea become deeply rooted there, that extraordinary men are extraordinary, precisely because their duties differ from the duties of ordinary men; that he, whose task it is to watch over, to govern, to preserve a great whole, needs not reproach himself with having overlooked trifling circumstances, with having sacrificed small matters to the

good of the whole. Thus acts the Creator in nature, and the king in the state; why should not we do the same, in order to resemble them?

CLAVIGO. Carlos, I am a little man.

CARLOS. We are not little when circumstances trouble us, only when they overpower us. Yet another breath, and you are yourself again. Cast away the remnant of a pitiable passion, which in these days as little becomes you as the little grey jacket and modest mien with which you arrived at Madrid. What the poor girl has done for you, you have long ago returned; and that your first friendly reception was from her hands.—Oh! another, for the pleasure of your acquaintance, would have done as much and more, without putting forth such pretensions . . . and would you take it into your head to give your schoolmaster the half of your fortune because he taught you the alphabet thirty years ago? What say you, Clavigo!

CLAVIGO. That is all very well. On the whole you may be right, it may be so; only how are we to get out of the embarrassment in which we stick fast? Advise me there, help me there, and then lecture.

CARLOS. Good! Do you wish it so?

CLAVIGO. Give me the power and I shall exert it. I am not able to think; think for me.

CARLOS. Thus then. First you will go and meet this person, and then you will demand, sword in hand, the vindication which you inconsiderately and involuntarily gave.

CLAVIGO. I have it already; he tore it and returned it to me.

CARLOS. Excellent! excellent! That step taken already—and you have let me speak so long?—Your course is so much the shorter! Write him quite coolly: “You find it inconvenient to marry his sister; the reason he can learn if he will repair to-night to a certain place, attended by a friend, and armed with any weapons he likes.” And then follows the signature.—Come, Clavigo, write that; I shall be your second—and the devil is in it if— (CLAVIGO *approaches the table.*) Listen! A word! If I think aright of it, it is an extravagant proposal. Who are we to risk our lives

with a mad adventurer? Besides, the man's conduct, his standing, do not deserve that we regard him as an equal. Listen then! Now if I made a criminal charge against him, that he arrived secretly at Madrid, got himself announced under a pseudonym with an accomplice, at first gained your confidence with friendly words, and thereafter fell upon you all of a sudden, forcibly obtained a declaration, and afterwards went off to spread it abroad—that will prove his ruin: he shall learn what that means—to invade the tranquillity of a Spaniard under his own roof.

CLAVIGO. You are right.

CARLOS. But till the law-suit has begun, in which interval the gentleman might play all sorts of tricks, if now we could meanwhile play a dead-sure game, and seize him tight by the head.

CLAVIGO. I understand, and know you are the man to carry it out.

CARLOS. Ah! well! if I, who have been at it for five-and-twenty years, and have witnessed tears of anguish trickling down the cheeks of the foremost men, if I cannot unravel such child's play! So then, give me full power; you need do nothing, write nothing. He, who orders the imprisonment of the brother, pantomimically intimates that he will have nothing to do with the sister.

CLAVIGO. No, Carlos! Let it go as it may, I cannot, I will not suffer that. Beaumarchais is a worthy man, and he shall not languish in an ignominious prison on account of his righteous cause. Another plan, Carlos, another!

CARLOS. Bah! bah! Stuff and nonsense! We will not devour him. He will be well lodged and well cared for, and thereafter he cannot hold out long: for, observe, when he perceives that it is in earnest, all his theatrical rage will cease; he will come to terms, return smartly to France, and be only too thankful, if we secure a yearly pension for his sister—perhaps the only thing he cared a straw about.

CLAVIGO. So be it then! Only let him be kindly dealt with.

CARLOS. Leave that to me.—One precaution more! We cannot know but that it may be blabbed out—that

the thing may get wind, and then he gets over you, and all is lost. Therefore, leave your house, so that your very servant does not know where you have gone. Take with you only absolute necessities. I shall dispatch you a fellow, who will conduct you and bring you to a place where the holy Hermandad herself will not find you. I have always in readiness a few of these mouseholes. Adieu!

CLAVIGO. Good bye!

CARLOS. Cheer up! cheerily! When it is all over, brother, we will enjoy ourselves. *[Exit.]*

SCENE II. GUILBERT'S *abode*.

SOPHIE GUILBERT, MARIE BEAUMARCHAIS *at work*.

MARIE. With such violence did Buenco depart?

SOPHIE. It was natural. He loves you, and how could he endure the sight of the man whom he must doubly hate?

MARIE. He is the best, most upright citizen whom I have ever known. *(Showing her work to her sister.)* It seems to me I must do it thus. I shall take in that and turn the end up. That will do nicely.

SOPHIE. Very well. And I am going to put a straw-coloured ribbon on my bonnet; it becomes me best. Do you smile?

MARIE. I am laughing at myself. We girls are wonderful people, I must say: hardly are our spirits but a little raised than straightway we are busy with finery and ribbons.

SOPHIE. You cannot find fault with yourself at all; from the moment Clavigo forsook you, nothing could give you the least pleasure. *(MARIE starts up and looks towards the door.)* What is the matter?

MARIE *(anxious)*. I thought some one was coming! My poor heart! O, it will destroy me yet! Feel how it beats with groundless terrors!

SOPHIE. You look pale. Be calm, I beseech you, my love!

MARIE *(pointing to her breast)*. I feel here an oppression—a sudden pain. It will kill me.

SOPHIE. Be careful.

MARIE. I am a foolish, hapless girl. Pain and joy with all their force have undermined my poor life. I tell you, 'tis but half a joy that I have him again. Little shall I enjoy the happiness that awaits me in his arms; perhaps not at all.

SOPHIE. My sister, my only love! You are wearing yourself out with these visions.

MARIE. Why shall I deceive myself?

SOPHIE. You are young and happy, and can hope for all.

MARIE. Hope! O the only sweet balm of life! How often it charms my soul! Happy youthful dreams hover before me and accompany the beloved form of the peerless one, who now is mine again. O Sophie, he is so winsome! Whilst I saw him not, he has—I know not how I shall express it;—all the qualities, which in former days lay hid in him through his diffidence, have unfolded themselves. He has become a man, and must with this pure feeling of his, with which he advances, that is so entirely devoid of pride and vanity—he must captivate all hearts.—And he shall be mine? No, my sister, I was not worthy of him—and now I am much less so!

SOPHIE. Take him, however, and be happy. I hear your brother!

BEAUMARCHAIS enters.

BEAUMARCHAIS. Where is Guilbert?

SOPHIE. He has been gone some time; he cannot be much longer.

MARIE. What is the matter, brother? (*Springing up and falling on his neck.*) Dear brother, what is the matter?

BEAUMARCHAIS. Nothing! nothing at all, my Marie!

MARIE. If I am thy Marie, do tell me what is on thy mind!

SOPHIE. Let him be. Men often look vexed without having aught particular on their mind.

MARIE. No, no. I see thy face only a little while; but already I read all thy thoughts, all the feelings of thy pure and sincere soul are stamped on thy brow. There is somewhat which makes thee anxious. Speak, what is it?

BEAUMARCHAIS. It is nothing, my love. I hope that at bottom it is nothing. Clavigo——

MARIE. How?

BEAUMARCHAIS. I was at Clavigo's house. He is not at home.

SOPHIE. And does that perplex you?

BEAUMARCHAIS. His hall-servant says he has gone he knows not where; no one knows how long. If he should be hiding himself! If he be really gone! Whither? for what reason?

MARIE. We will wait.

BEAUMARCHAIS. Thy tongue lies. Ah! the paleness of thy cheeks, the trembling of thy limbs, all speaks and testifies that thou canst not wait. Dear sister! (*Clasps her in his arms.*) On this beating, painfully trembling heart I vow,—hear me, O God, who art righteous! hear me, all His saints!—thou shalt be avenged, if he—my senses abandon me at the thought—if he fail, if he make himself guilty of a frightful, double perjury; if he mock at our misery . . . No, it is, it is not possible, not possible—Thou shalt be avenged.

SOPHIE. All too soon, too precipitate. Be careful of her health, I beseech you, my brother. (*MARIE sits down.*) What ails thee? You are fainting.

MARIE. No, no. You are so anxious.

SOPHIE (*gives her water*). Take this glass.

MARIE. No, no! what avails that? Well, for my own sake, give it me.

BEAUMARCHAIS. Where is Guilbert? Where is Buenco? Send after them, I entreat you. (*SOPHIE exits.*) How dost thou feel, Marie?

MARIE. Well, quite well! Think'st thou then, brother——

BEAUMARCHAIS. What, my love?

MARIE. Ah!

BEAUMARCHAIS. Is your breathing painful?

MARIE. The disordered beating of my heart oppresses me.

BEAUMARCHAIS. Have you then no remedy? Do you use no anodyne?

MARIE. I know of only one remedy, and for that I have prayed to God many a time and oft.

BEAUMARCHAIS. Thou shalt have it, and I hope from my hand.

MARIE. That will do well.

SOPHIE enters.

SOPHIE. A courier has just brought this letter; he comes from Aranjuez.

BEAUMARCHAIS. That is the seal and the hand of our ambassador.

SOPHIE. I bade him dismount and take some refreshment; he would not, because he had yet more despatches.

MARIE. Will you, my love, send the servant for the physician?

SOPHIE. Are you ill? Holy God! what ails thee?

MARIE. You will make me so anxious that at last I shall scarcely dare ask for a glass of water . . . Sophie! Brother!—What is in the letter? See, how he trembles! how all courage leaves him!

SOPHIE. Brother, my brother! (BEAUMARCHAIS *throws himself speechless into a chair and lets the letter fall.*) My brother! (*Lifts up the letter and reads it.*)

MARIE. Let me see it! I must—(*tries to rise*). Alas! I feel it. It is the last. O sister, spare not for mercy's sake the last quick death-stroke!—He betrays us!

BEAUMARCHAIS (*springing up*). He betrays us! (*Beating on his brow and breast.*) Here! here! All is as dumb, as dead before my soul, as if a thunder-clap had disordered my senses. Marie! Marie! thou art betrayed!—and I stand here! Whither?—What?—I see nothing, nothing! no way, no safety! (*Throws himself into a seat.*)

GUILBERT enters.

SOPHIE. Guilbert! Counsel! Help! We are lost!

GUILBERT. My wife!

SOPHIE. Read! read! The ambassador makes known to our brother: that Clavigo has made a criminal complaint against him, under the pretext that he introduced himself into his house under a false name; and that taking him by surprise in bed and presenting a pistol, he compelled him to sign a disgraceful vindication; and if he do not

quickly withdraw from the kingdom, they will get him thrown into prison, from which the ambassador himself perhaps will not be able to deliver him.

BEAUMARCHAIS (*springing up*). Indeed, they shall do so! they shall do so! shall get me imprisoned; but from his corpse, from the place where I shall have glutted my vengeance with his blood. Ah! the stern, frightful thirst after his blood fills my whole soul. Thanks to Thee, God in heaven, that Thou vouchsafest to man, amid burning, insupportable wrongs, a solace, a refreshment! What a thirst for vengeance I feel in my breast! how the glorious feeling, the lust for his blood, raises me out of my utter dejection, out of my sluggish indecision; raises me above myself! Vengeance! How I rejoice in it! how all within me strives after him, to seize him, to destroy him!

SOPHIE. Thou art terrible, brother!

BEAUMARCHAIS. So much the better.—Ah! No sword, no weapon! with these hands will I strangle him, that the triumph may be mine! all my own the feeling: I have destroyed him!

MARIE. My heart! my heart!

BEAUMARCHAIS. I have not been able to save thee, so thou shalt be avenged. I pant after his footsteps, my teeth lust after his flesh, my gums after his blood. Have I become a frantic wild beast! There burns in every vein, there glows in every nerve, the desire after him, after him!—I could hate him for ever, who should make away with him by poison, who should rid me of him by assassination. O help me, Guilbert, to seek him out. Where is Buenco? Help me to find him!

GUILBERT. Save yourself! save yourself! you have lost your reason.

MARIE. Flee, my brother!

SOPHIE. Take him away; he will cause his sister's death.

BUENCO *appears*.

BUENCO. Up, sir! away! I saw it before. I gave heed to all. And now they are in hot pursuit; you are lost if you do not leave the town this moment.

BEAUMARCHAIS. Never more! where is Clavio?

BUENCO. I do not know.

BEAUMARCHAIS. Thou knowest. I entreat you on my knees, tell me,

SOPHIE. For God's sake, Buenco!

MARIE. Ah! air! air! (*Falls back.*) Clavigo!—

BUENCO. Help, she is dying!

SOPHIE. Forsake us not, God in heaven;—Hence! my brother, away!

BEAUMARCHAIS (*falls down before Marie, who despite every aid does not recover*). To forsake thee! to forsake thee!

SOPHIE. Stay, then, and ruin us all, as you have killed Marie. You are gone, then, O my sister, through the heedlessness of your own brother!

BEAUMARCHAIS. Stop, sister!

SOPHIE (*mocking*). Saviour!—Avenger!—help yourself!

BEAUMARCHAIS. Do I deserve this?

SOPHIE. Give her to me again! And then go to the prison, to the stake; go, pour forth thy blood and give me her again.

BEAUMARCHAIS. Sophie!

SOPHIE. Ha! and she is gone, she is dead—save yourself for us! (*falling on his neck*) my brother, for us! for our father! Haste, haste! That was her fate! she has met it! And there is a God in heaven, to Him leave vengeance.

BUENCO. Hence! away! Come with me; I will hide you till we find means to get you out of the kingdom.

BEAUMARCHAIS (*falls on MARIE and kisses her*). Sister dear! (*They tear him away, he clasps SOPHIE, she disengages herself. They remove MARIE, and BUENCO and BEAUMARCHAIS retire.*)

GUILBERT, a PHYSICIAN.

SOPHIE (*returning from the room to which they had taken MARIE*). Too late! She is gone! she is dead!

GUILBERT. Come in, sir!—See for yourself! It is not possible! [*Exit.*]

ACT V.

SCENE I. *The Street before the house of* GUILBERT. *Night.*

(The house is open, and before the door stand three men clad in black mantles, holding torches. CLAVIGO enters, wrapped in a cloak, his sword under his arm; a SERVANT goes before him with a torch.)

CLAVIGO. I told you to avoid this street.

SERVANT. We must have gone a great way round, sir, and you are in such haste. It is not far hence where Don Carlos is lodged.

CLAVIGO. Torches there!

SERVANT. A funeral. Come on, sir.

CLAVIGO. Marie's abode! A funeral! A death-agony shudders through all my limbs! Go, ask whom they are going to bury.

SERVANT *(to the men)*. Whom are you going to bury?

THE MEN. Marie de Beaumarchais.

(CLAVIGO sits down on a stone and covers himself with a cloak.)

SERVANT *(comes back)*. They are going to bury Marie de Beaumarchais.

CLAVIGO *(springing up)*. Must thou repeat it? Repeat that word of thunder which strikes all the marrow out of my bones?

SERVANT. Peace, sir! Come on, sir. Consider the danger by which you are surrounded.

CLAVIGO. To hell with thee, reptile! I remain.

SERVANT. O, Carlos! O, that I could find thee!—Carlos!—he has lost his reason. *[Exit.]*

SCENE II. CLAVIGO. *The Mutes in the distance.*

CLAVIGO. Dead! Marie dead! Torches! her dismal attendants! it is a trick of enchantment, a night vision, which terrifies me; which holds up to me a mirror, in which I may see foreboded the end of all my treacheries. But there is still time. Still!—I tremble—my heart melts with horror! No! no! thou shalt not die—I come, I come! Vanish, ye spirits of the night, who with your

horrible terrors set yourselves in my way. (*He goes up to them.*) Vanish—they remain! Ha! they look round after me! Woe! woe is me! They are men like myself. It is true! true! Canst thou comprehend it? She is dead! It seizes me amid all the horrors of midnight—the feeling—she is dead. There she lies, the flower at your feet! and thou—O have mercy on me, God in heaven—I have not killed her! Hide yourselves, ye stars, look not down! Ye, who have so often beheld the villain, with feelings of the most heartfelt happiness, leave this threshold; through this very street float along in golden dreams with music and song, and enrapture his maiden listening at the secret casement and lingering in transport. And now I fill the house with wailing and sorrow—and this scene of my bliss with the funeral song—Marie! Marie! take me with thee! take me with thee! (*Mournful music breathes forth a few sounds from within.*) They are setting out on the way to the grave. Stop! stop! Shut not the coffin. Let me see her once more. (*He runs up to the house.*) Ha! into whose presence am I rushing? Whom to face in his terrible sorrow? Her friends! her brother! whose breast is panting with raving grief! (*The music recommences.*) She calls me! she calls me! I come! What anguish is this which overwhelms me? What shuddering withholds me?

(*The music begins for the third time and continues. The torches move before the door; three others come out to them, who range themselves in order to inclose the funeral procession, which now comes out of the house. Six bearers carry the bier, upon which lies the coffin, covered.*)

SCENE III. GUILBERT and BUENCO (*in deep mourning*).

CLAVIGO (*coming forward*). Stay!

GUILBERT. What voice is that?

CLAVIGO. Stay! (*The bearers stop.*)

BUENCO. Who dares to interrupt the solemn funeral?

CLAVIGO. Set it down.

GUILBERT. Ha!

BUENCO. Wretch! are thy deeds of shame not yet ended? Is thy victim not safe from thee in the coffin?

CLAVIGO. No more! Make me not frantic. The wretched are dangerous; I must see her. (*He tears off the pall and the lid of the coffin. MARIE is seen lying within it, clad in white, her hands clasped before her; CLAVIGO steps back and covers his face.*)

BUENCO. Wilt thou awake her to murder her again?

CLAVIGO. Poor mocker! Marie! (*He falls down before the coffin.*)

SCENE IV. *Enter BEAUMARCHAIS. The preceding.*

BEAUMARCHAIS. Buenco has left me. They say she is not dead. I must see, spite of hell, I must see her. Ha! torches! a funeral! (*He runs hastily up to it, gazes on the coffin, and falls down speechless. They raise him up; he is as if deprived of sense; GUILBERT holds him.*)

CLAVIGO (*who is standing on the other side of the coffin*). Marie! Marie!

BEAUMARCHAIS (*springing up*). That is his voice. Who calls Marie? At the sound of that voice what burning rage starts into my veins!

CLAVIGO. It is I. (*BEAUMARCHAIS staring wildly around and grasping his sword. GUILBERT holds him*). I fear not thy blazing eyes, nor the point of thy sword. Oh! look here, here, on these closed eyes—these clasped hands!

BEAUMARCHAIS. Dost thou show me that sight? (*He tears himself loose, runs upon CLAVIGO, who instantly draws; they fight; BEAUMARCHAIS pierces him through the breast.*)

CLAVIGO (*falling*). I thank thee, brother; thou marriest us. (*He falls upon the coffin.*)

BEAUMARCHAIS (*tearing him away*). Hence from this saint, thou fiend!

CLAVIGO. Alas! (*The bearers raise up his body and support him.*)

BEAUMARCHAIS. His blood! Look up, Marie, look upon thy bridal ornaments, and then close thine eyes for ever. See how I have consecrated thy place of rest with the blood of thy murderer! Charming! Glorious!

SCENE V. *Enter SOPHIE. The preceding.*

SOPHIE. My brother? O, my God, what is the matter?

BEAUMARCHAIS. Draw nearer, my love, and see! I hoped to have strewn her bridal bed with roses; see the roses with which I adorn her on her way to heaven!

SOPHIE. We are lost!

CLAVIGO. Save yourself, rash one! save yourself, ere the dawn of day. May God, who sent you for an avenger, conduct you! Sophie, forgive me. Brothers, friends, forgive me.

BEAUMARCHAIS. How the sight of his gushing blood extinguishes all the glowing vengeance within me! how with his departing life vanishes all my rage! (*Going up to him.*) Die, I forgive thee.

CLAVIGO. Your hand! and yours, Sophie! and yours! (*Buenco hesitates.*)

SOPHIE. Give it him, Buenco.

CLAVIGO. I thank you; you are as good as ever; I thank you. And thou, O spirit of my beloved, if thou still hoverest around this place, look down, see these heavenly favours, bestow thy blessing, and do thou too forgive me. I come! I come! Save yourself, my brother. Tell me, did she forgive me? How did she die?

SOPHIE. Her last word was thy unhappy name. She departed without taking leave of us.

CLAVIGO. I will follow her and bear your farewells to her.

SCENE VI. CARLOS, a SERVANT. *The preceding.*

CARLOS. Clavigo! murderers!

CLAVIGO. Hear me, Carlos! Thou seest here the victim of thy prudence; and now, I conjure thee, for the sake of that blood, in which my life irrevocably flows away, save my brother.

CARLOS. O, my friend! (*to the SERVANT.*) You standing there? Fly for a surgeon. [*Exit SERVANT.*]

CLAVIGO. It is in vain; save, save my unhappy brother! thy hard thereon. They have forgiven me, and so

forgive I thee. Accompany him to the frontiers, and—oh!

CARLOS (*stamping with his feet*). Clavigo! Clavigo!

CLAVIGO (*drawing nearer to the coffin, upon which they lay him down*). Marie! Thy hand! (*He unfolds her hands and grasps the right hand.*)

SOPHIE (*to BEAUMARCHAIS*). Hence, unhappy one, away!

CLAVIGO. I have her hand, her cold, dead hand. Thou art mine. Yet this last bridal kiss! Alas!

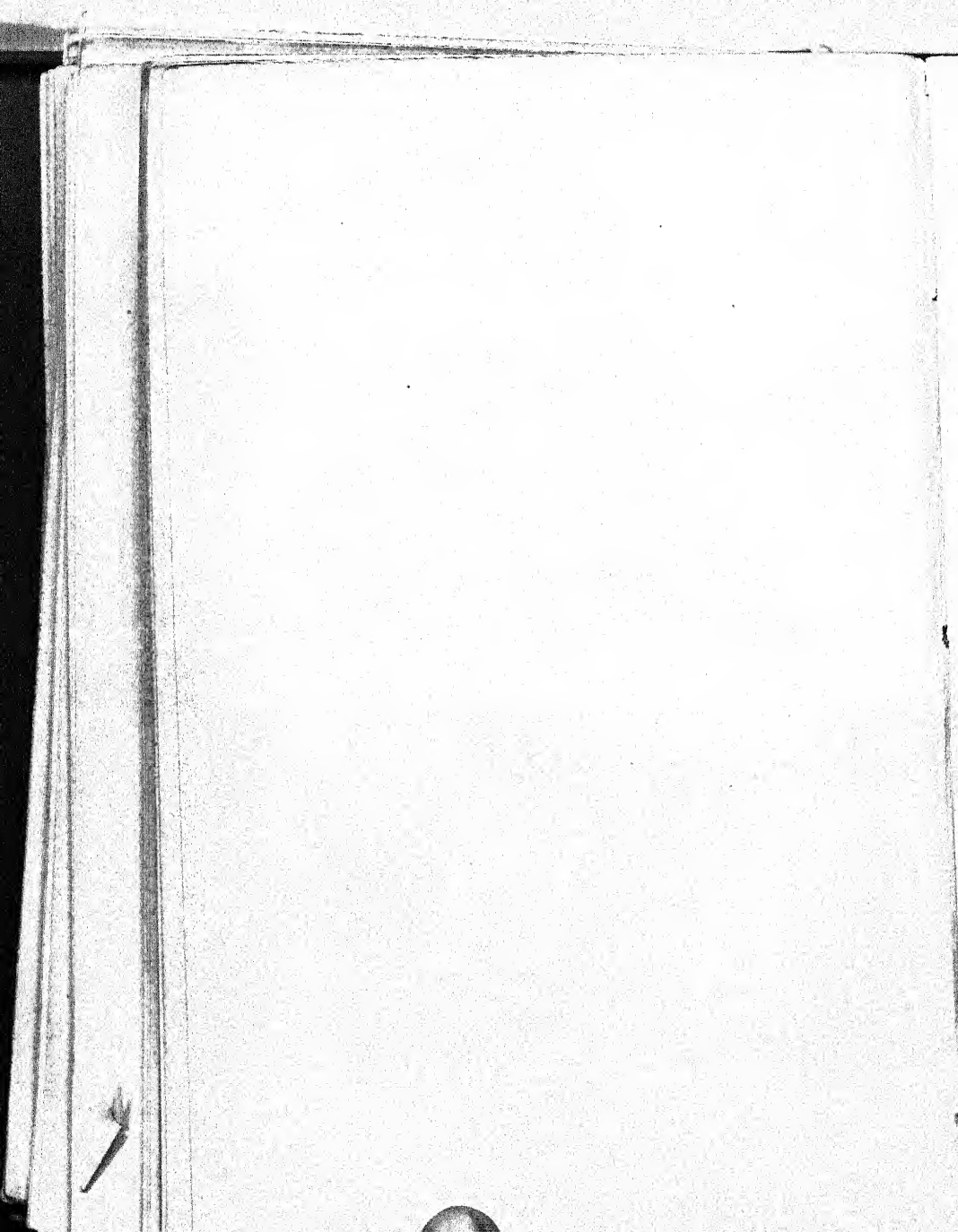
SOPHIE. He is dying! Save thyself, brother! (BEAUMARCHAIS *falls on SOPHIE's neck. She returns the embrace and makes a sign for him to withdraw.*)

EGMONT.

A TRAGEDY IN FIVE ACTS.

TRANSLATED BY ANNA SWANWICK.

This tragedy was commenced in the year 1775, when Goethe was twenty-six years of age—but it was not finished until eleven years later. A rough draft of the whole was made in 1782, but it was only completed and finally rewritten during Goethe's residence in Rome in 1786.



INTRODUCTION.

IN Schiller's critique upon the tragedy of *Egmont*, Goethe is censured for departing from the truth of history in the delineation of his hero's character, and also for misrepresenting the circumstances of his domestic life. The *Egmont* of history left behind him a numerous family, anxiety for whose welfare detained him in Brussels when most of his friends sought safety in flight. His withdrawal would have entailed the confiscation of his property, and he shrank from exposing to privation those whose happiness was dearer to him than life;—a consideration which he repeatedly urged in his conferences with the Prince of Orange, when the latter insisted upon the necessity of escape. We see here, not the victim of a blind and fool-hardy confidence, as portrayed in Goethe's drama, but the husband and father, regardless of his personal safety in anxiety for the interests of his family.

I shall not inquire which conception is best suited for the purposes of art, but merely subjoin a few extracts from the same critique, in which Schiller does ample justice to Goethe's admirable delineation of the age and country in which the drama is cast, and which are peculiarly valuable from the pen of so competent an authority as the historian of the Fall of the Netherlands.

"*Egmont's* tragical death resulted from the relation in which he stood to the nation and the government; hence the action of the drama is intimately connected with the

political life of the period—an exhibition of which forms its indispensable groundwork. But if we consider what an infinite number of minute circumstances must concur in order to exhibit the spirit of an age, and the political condition of a people, and the art required to combine so many isolated features into an intelligible and organic whole; and if we contemplate, moreover, the peculiar character of the Netherlands, consisting not of one nation, but of an aggregate of many smaller states, separated from each other by the sharpest contrasts, we shall not cease to wonder at the creative genius, which, triumphing over all these difficulties, conjures up before us, as with an enchanter's wand, the Netherlands of the sixteenth century.

“Not only do we behold these men living and working before us, we dwell among them as their familiar associates; we see on the other hand, the joyous sociability, the hospitality, the loquacity, the somewhat boastful temper of the people, their republican spirit, ready to boil up at the slightest innovation, and often subsiding again as rapidly on the most trivial grounds; and on the other hand, we are made acquainted with the burdens under which they groaned, from the new mitres of the bishops, to the French psalms which they were forbidden to sing;—nothing is omitted, no feature introduced which does not bear the stamp of nature and of truth. Such delineation is not the result of premeditated effort, nor can it be commanded by art; it can only be achieved by the poet whose mind is thoroughly imbued with his subject; from him such traits escape unconsciously, and without design, as they do from the individuals whose characters they serve to portray.

“The few scenes in which the citizens of Brussels are introduced appear to us to be the result of profound study, and it would be difficult to find, in so few words, a more

admirable historical monument of the Netherlands of that period.

"Equally graphic is that portion of the picture which portrays the spirit of the government, though it must be confessed that the artist has here somewhat softened down the harsher features of the original. This is especially true in reference to the character of the Duchess of Parma. Before his Duke of Alva we tremble, without however turning from him with aversion; he is a firm, rigid, inaccessible character; 'a brazen tower without gates, the garrison of which must be furnished with wings.' The prudent forecast with which he makes his arrangements for Egmont's arrest, excites our admiration, while it removes him from our sympathy. The remaining characters of the drama are delineated with a few masterly strokes. The subtle, taciturn Orange, with his timid, yet comprehensive and all-combining mind, is depicted in a single scene. Both Alva and Egmont are mirrored in the men by whom they are surrounded. This mode of delineation is admirable. The poet, in order to concentrate the interest upon Egmont, has isolated his hero, and omitted all mention of Count Horn, who shared the same melancholy fate."

The appendix to Schiller's 'History of the Fall of the Netherlands' contains an interesting account of the trial and execution of the Counts Egmont and Horn, which is, however, too long for insertion here.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MARGARET OF PARMA, *Daughter of Charles V., and
Regent of the Netherlands.*

COUNT EGMONT, *Prince of Gaure.*

WILLIAM OF ORANGE.

THE DUKE OF ALVA.

FERDINAND, *his natural Son.*

MACHIAVEL, *in the service of the Regent.*

RICHARD, *Egmont's Private Secretary.*

SILVA, }
GOMEZ, } *in the service of Alva.*

CLARA, *the Beloved of Egmont.*

HER MOTHER.

BRACKENBURG, *a Citizen's Son.*

SOEST, *a Shopkeeper,*
JETTER, *a Tailor,*
A CARPENTER,
A SOAPBOILER, } *Citizens of Brussels.*

BUYCK, *a Hollander, a Soldier under Egmont.*

RUYSUM, *a Frieslander, an invalid Soldier, and deaf.*

VANSEN, *a Clerk.*

People, Attendants, Guards, &c.

The Scene is laid in Brusse's.

EGMONT.

ACT I.

SCENE I. *Soldiers and Citizens (with cross-bows).*

JETTER (*steps forward, and bends his cross-bow*). SOEST,
BUYCK, RUYSUM.

SOEST. Come, shoot away, and have done with it! You won't beat me! Three black rings, you never made such a shot in all your life. And so I'm master for this year.

JETTER. Master and king to boot; who envies you? You'll have to pay double reckoning; 'tis only fair you should pay for your dexterity.

BUYCK. Jetter, I'll buy your shot, share the prize, and treat the company. I have already been here so long, and am a debtor for so many civilities. If I miss, then it shall be as if you had shot.

SOEST. I ought to have a voice, for in fact I am the loser. No matter! Come Buyck, shoot away.

BUYCK (*shoots*). Now, corporal, look out!—One! Two! Three! Four!

SOEST. Four rings! So be it!

ALL. Hurrah! Long live the King! Hurrah! Hurrah!

BUYCK. Thanks, sirs, master even were too much! Thanks for the honour.

JETTER. You have no one to thank but yourself.

RUYSUM. Let me tell you!—

SOEST. How now, grey-beard?

RUYSUM. Let me tell you!—He shoots like his master, he shoots like Egmont.

BUYCK. Compared with him I am only a bungler. He aims with the rifle as no one else does. Not only when he's lucky or in the vein; no! he levels, and the bull's-eye is pierced. I have learned from him. He were indeed a blockhead, who could serve under him and learn nothing!—But, sirs, let us not forget! A king maintains his followers; and so, wine here, at the king's charge!

JETTER. We have agreed among ourselves that each—

BUYCK. I am a foreigner and a king, and care not a jot for your laws and customs.

JETTER. Why you are worse than the Spaniard, who has not yet ventured to meddle with them.

RUYSUM. What does he say?

SOEST (*loud to RUYSUM*). He wants to treat us; he will not hear of our clubbing together, the king paying only a double share.

RUYSUM. Let him! under protest, however! 'Tis his master's fashion, too, to be munificent, and to let the money flow in a good cause. (*Wine is brought.*)

ALL. Here's to his Majesty! Hurrah!

JETTER (*to BUYCK*). That means your Majesty, of course.

BUYCK. My hearty thanks, if it be so.

SOEST. Assuredly! A Netherlander does not find it easy to drink the health of his Spanish majesty from his heart.

RUYSUM. Who?

SOEST (*aloud*). Philip the Second, King of Spain.

RUYSUM. Our most gracious king and master! Long life to him.

SOEST. Did you not like his father, Charles the Fifth, better?

RUYSUM. God bless him! He was a king indeed! His hand reached over the whole earth, and he was all in all. Yet, when he met you, he'd greet you just as one neighbour greets another,—and if you were frightened, he knew so well how to put you at your ease—ay, you understand me—he walked out, rode out, just as it came

into his head, with very few followers. We all wept when he resigned the government here to his son. You understand me—he is another sort of man, he's more majestic.

JETTER. When he was here, he never appeared in public, except in pomp and royal state. He speaks little, they say.

SOEST. He is no king for us Netherlanders. Our princes must be joyous and free like ourselves, must live and let live. We will neither be despised nor oppressed, good-natured fools though we be.

JETTER. The king, methinks, were a gracious sovereign enough, if he had only better counsellors.

SOEST. No, no! He has no affection for us Netherlanders; he has no heart for the people; he loves us not; how then can we love him? Why is everybody so fond of Count Egmont? Why are we all so devoted to him? Why, because one can read in his face that he loves us; because joyousness, open-heartedness, and good-nature, speak in his eyes; because he possesses nothing that he does not share with him who needs it, ay, and with him who needs it not. Long live Count Egmont! Buyck, it is for you to give the first toast; give us your master's health.

BUYCK. With all my heart; here's to Count Egmont! Hurrah!

RUYSUM. Conqueror of St. Quintin.

BUYCK. The hero of Gravelines.

ALL. Hurrah!

RUYSUM. St. Quintin was my last battle. I was hardly able to crawl along, and could with difficulty carry my heavy rifle. I managed, notwithstanding, to singe the skin of the French once more, and, as a parting gift, received a grazing shot in my right leg.

BUYCK. Gravelines! Ha, my friends, we had sharp work of it there! The victory was all our own. Did not those French dogs carry fire and desolation into the very heart of Flanders? We gave it them, however! The old hard-fisted veterans held out bravely for a while, but we pushed on, fired away, and laid about us, till they made wry faces, and their lines gave way. Then

Egmont's horse was shot under him ; and for a long time we fought pell-mell, man to man, horse to horse, troop to troop, on the broad, flat, sea-sand. Suddenly, as if from heaven, down came the cannon shot from the mouth of the river, bang, bang, right into the midst of the French. These were English, who, under Admiral Malin, happened to be sailing past from Dunkirk. They did not help us much, 'tis true ; they could only approach with their smallest vessels, and that not near enough ;—besides, their shot fell sometimes among our troops. It did some good, however ! It broke the French lines, and raised our courage. Away it went. Helter-skelter ! topsy-turvy ! all struck dead, or forced into the water ; the fellows were drowned the moment they tasted the water, while we Hollanders dashed in after them. Being amphibious, we were as much in our element as frogs, and hacked away at the enemy, and shot them down as if they had been ducks. The few who struggled through, were struck dead in their flight by the peasant women, armed with hoes and pitchforks. His Gallic majesty was compelled at once to hold out his paw and make peace. And that peace you owe to us, to the great Egmont.

ALL. Hurrah, for the great Egmont ! Hurrah ! Hurrah !

JETTER. Had they but appointed him Regent, instead of Margaret of Parma !

SOEST. Not so ! Truth is truth ! I'll not hear Margaret abused. Now it is my turn. Long live our gracious lady !

ALL. Long life to her !

SOEST. Truly, there are excellent women in that family. Long live the Regent !

JETTER. Prudent is she, and moderate in all she does ; if she would only not hold so fast and stiffly with the priests. It is partly her fault, too, that we have the fourteen new mitres in the land. Of what use are they, I should like to know ? Why, that foreigners may be shoved into the good benefices, where formerly abbots were chosen out of the chapters ! And we're to believe it's for the sake of religion. We know better. Three bishops were enough for us ; things went on decently and re-

putably. Now each must busy himself as if he were needed; and this gives rise every moment to dissensions and ill-will. And the more you agitate the matter, so much the worse it grows. (*They drink.*)

SOEST. But it was the will of the king; she cannot alter it, one way or another.

JETTER. Then we may not even sing the new psalms; but ribald songs, as many as we please. And why? There is heresy in them, they say, and heaven knows what. I have sung some of them, however; they are new, to be sure, but I see no harm in them.

BUYCK. Ask their leave, forsooth! In our province we sing just what we please. That's because Count Egmont is our stadtholder, who does not trouble himself about such matters. In Ghent, Ypres, and throughout the whole of Flanders, anybody sings them that chooses. (*Aloud to RUYSUM.*) There is nothing more harmless than a spiritual song—Is there, father?

RUYSUM. What, indeed! It is a godly work, and truly edifying.

JETTER. They say, however, that they are not of the right sort, not of their sort, and, since it is dangerous, we had better leave them alone. The officers of the Inquisition are always lurking and spying about; many an honest fellow has already fallen into their clutches. They had not gone so far as to meddle with conscience! If they will not allow me to do what I like, they might at least let me think and sing as I please.

SOEST. The Inquisition won't do here. We are not made like the Spaniards, to let our consciences be tyrannized over. The nobles must look to it, and clip its wings betimes.

JETTER. It is a great bore. Whenever it comes into their worships' heads to break into my house, and I am sitting there at my work, humming a French psalm, thinking nothing about it, neither good nor bad—singing it just because it is in my throat;—forthwith I'm a heretic, and am clapped into prison. Or if I am passing through the country, and stand near a crowd listening to a new preacher, one of those who have come from Germany; instantly I'm called a rebel, and am in danger of

losing my head! Have you ever heard one of these preachers?

SOEST. Brave fellows! Not long ago, I heard one of them preach in a field, before thousands and thousands of people. A different sort of dish he gave us from that of our humdrum preachers, who, from the pulpit, choke their hearers with scraps of Latin. He spoke from his heart; told us how we had till now been led by the nose, how we had been kept in darkness, and how we might procure more light;—ay, and he proved it all out of the Bible.

JETTER. There may be something in it. I always said as much, and have often pondered over the matter. It has long been running in my head.

BUYCK. All the people run after them.

SOEST. No wonder, since they hear both what is good and what is new.

JETTER. And what is it all about? Surely they might let every one preach after his own fashion.

BUYCK. Come, sirs! While you are talking, you forget the wine and the Prince of Orange.

JETTER. We must not forget him. He's a very wall of defence. In thinking of him, one fancies, that if one could only hide behind him, the devil himself could not get at one. Here's to William of Orange! Hurrah!

ALL. Hurrah! Hurrah!

SOEST. Now, grey-beard, let's have your toast.

RUYSUM. Here's to old soldiers! To all soldiers! War for ever!

BUYCK. Bravo, old fellow. Here's to all soldiers. War for ever!

JETTER. War! War! Do ye know what ye are shouting about? That it should slip glibly from your tongue is natural enough; but what wretched work it is for us, I have not words to tell you. To be stunned the whole year round by the beating of the drum; to hear of nothing except how one troop marched here, and another there, how they came over this height, and halted near that mill; how many were left dead on this field, and how many on that; how they press forward, and how one wins, and another loses, without being able to comprehend what they are fighting about; how a town is taken, how

the citizens are put to the sword, and how it fares with the poor women and innocent children. This is a grief and a trouble, and then one thinks every moment, "Here they come! It will be our turn next."

SOEST. Therefore every citizen must be practised in the use of arms.

JETTER. Fine talking, indeed, for him who has a wife and children. And yet I would rather hear of soldiers than see them.

BUYCK. I might take offence at that.

JETTER. It was not intended for you, countryman. When we got rid of the Spanish garrison, we breathed freely again.

SOEST. Faith! They pressed on you heavily enough.

JETTER. Mind your own business.

SOEST. They came to sharp quarters with you.

JETTER. Hold your tongue.

SOEST. They drove him out of kitchen, cellar, chamber—and bed. *(They laugh.)*

JETTER. You are a blockhead.

BUYCK. Peace, sirs! Must the soldier cry peace? Since you will not hear anything about us, let us have a toast of your own—a citizen's toast.

JETTER. We're all ready for that! Safety and peace!

SOEST. Order and freedom!

BUYCK. Bravo! That will content us all.

(They ring their glasses together, and joyously repeat the words, but in such a manner that each utters a different sound, and it becomes a kind of chant. The old man listens, and at length joins in.)

ALL. Safety and peace! Order and freedom!

SCENE II. *Palace of the Regent.*

MARGARET OF PARMA *(in a hunting dress)*. COURTIER, PAGES, SERVANTS.

REGENT. Put off the hunt, I shall not ride to-day. Bid Machiavel attend me. *[Exeunt all but the REGENT.]*

The thought of these terrible events leaves me no repose! Nothing can amuse, nothing divert my mind. These images, these cares are always before me. The king

will now say that these are the natural fruits of my kindness, of my clemency; yet my conscience assures me that I have adopted the wisest, the most prudent course. Ought I sooner to have kindled, and spread abroad these flames with the breath of wrath? My hope was to keep them in, to let them smoulder in their own ashes. Yes, my inward conviction, and my knowledge of the circumstances, justify my conduct in my own eyes; but in what light will it appear to my brother! For, can it be denied that the insolence of these foreign teachers waxes daily more audacious? They have desecrated our sanctuaries, unsettled the dull minds of the people, and conjured up amongst them a spirit of delusion. Impure spirits have mingled among the insurgents, horrible deeds have been perpetrated, which to think of makes one shudder, and of these a circumstantial account must be transmitted instantly to court. Prompt and minute must be my communication, lest rumour outrun my messenger, and the king suspect that some particulars have been purposely withheld. I can see no means, severe or mild, by which to stem the evil. Oh, what are we great ones on the waves of humanity? We think to control them, and are ourselves driven to and fro, hither and thither.

Enter MACHIAVEL.

REGENT. Are the despatches to the king prepared?

MACHIAVEL. In an hour they will be ready for your signature.

REGENT. Have you made the report sufficiently circumstantial.

MACHIAVEL. Full and circumstantial, as the king loves to have it. I relate how the rage of the iconoclasts first broke out at St. Omer. How a furious multitude, with staves, hatchets, hammers, ladders, and cords, accompanied by a few armed men, first assailed the chapels, churches, and convents, drove out the worshippers, forced the barred gates, threw everything into confusion, tore down the altars, destroyed the statues of the saints, defaced the pictures, and dashed to atoms, and trampled under foot, whatever came in their way that was consecrated and holy. How the crowd increased as it advanced, and how

the inhabitants of Ypres opened their gates at its approach. How, with incredible rapidity, they demolished the cathedral, and burned the library of the bishop. How a vast multitude, possessed by the like frenzy, dispersed themselves through Menin, Comines, Verviers, Lille, nowhere encountered opposition; and how, through almost the whole of Flanders, in a single moment, the monstrous conspiracy declared itself, and was accomplished.

REGENT. Alas! Your recital rends my heart anew; and the fear that the evil will wax greater and greater, adds to my grief. Tell me your thoughts, Machiavel!

MACHIAVEL. Pardon me, your Highness, my thoughts will appear to you but as idle fancies; and though you always seem well satisfied with my services, you have seldom felt inclined to follow my advice. How often have you said in jest: "You see too far, Machiavel! You should be an historian; he who acts, must provide for the exigence of the hour." And yet, have I not predicted this terrible history? Have I not foreseen it all?

REGENT. I too foresee many things, without being able to avert them.

MACHIAVEL. In one word, then:—you will not be able to suppress the new faith. Let it be recognized, separate its votaries from the true believers, give them churches of their own, include them within the pale of social order, subject them to the restraints of law,—do this, and you will at once tranquillize the insurgents. All other measures will prove abortive, and you will depopulate the country.

REGENT. Have you forgotten with what aversion the mere suggestion of toleration was rejected by my brother? Know you not, how in every letter he urgently recommends to me the maintenance of the true faith? That he will not hear of tranquillity and order being restored at the expense of religion? Even in the provinces, does he not maintain spies, unknown to us, in order to ascertain who inclines to the new doctrines? Has he not, to our astonishment, named to us this or that individual residing in our very neighbourhood, who, without its being known, was obnoxious to the charge of heresy? Does he not enjoin harshness and severity? and am I to be lenient? Am

I to recommend for his adoption measures of indulgence and toleration? Should I not thus lose all credit with him, and at once forfeit his confidence?

MACHIAVEL. I know it. The king commands and puts you in full possession of his intentions. You are to restore tranquillity and peace by measures which cannot fail still more to embitter men's minds, and which must inevitably kindle the flames of war from one extremity of the country to the other. Consider well what you are doing. The principal merchants are infected—nobles, citizens, soldiers. What avails persisting in our opinion, when everything is changing around us? Oh, that some good genius would suggest to Philip that it better becomes a monarch to govern burghers of two different creeds, than to excite them to mutual destruction!

REGENT. Never let me hear such words again. Full well I know that the policy of statesmen rarely maintains truth and fidelity; that it excludes from the heart candour, charity, toleration. In secular affairs, this is, alas! only too true; but shall we trifle with God as we do with each other? Shall we be indifferent to our established faith, for the sake of which so many have sacrificed their lives? Shall we abandon it to these far-fetched, uncertain, and self-contradicting heresies?

MACHIAVEL. Think not the worse of me for what I have uttered.

REGENT. I know you and your fidelity. I know too that a man may be both honest and sagacious, and yet miss the best and nearest way to the salvation of his soul. There are others, Machiavel, men whom I esteem, yet whom I needs must blame.

MACHIAVEL. To whom do you refer?

REGENT. I must confess that Egmont caused me to-day deep and heart-felt annoyance.

MACHIAVEL. How so?

REGENT. By his accustomed demeanour, his usual indifference and levity. I received the fatal tidings as I was leaving church, attended by him and several others. I did not restrain my anguish, I broke forth into lamentations, loud and deep, and turning to him, exclaimed, "See what is going on in your province! Do you

suffer it, Count, you, in whom the king confided so implicitly?"

MACHIAVEL. And what was his reply?

REGENT. As if it were a mere trifle, an affair of no moment, he answered: "Were the Netherlanders but satisfied as to their constitution! The rest would soon follow."

MACHIAVEL. There was, perhaps, more truth than discretion or piety in his words. How can we hope to acquire and to maintain the confidence of the Netherlander, when he sees that we are more interested in appropriating his possessions, than in promoting his welfare, temporal or spiritual? Does the number of souls saved by the new bishops exceed that of the fat benefices they have swallowed? And are they not for the most part foreigners? As yet, the office of stadtholder has been held by Netherlanders; but do not the Spaniards betray their great and irresistible desire to possess themselves of these places? Will not people prefer being governed by their own countrymen, and according to their ancient customs, rather than by foreigners, who, from their first entrance into the land, endeavour to enrich themselves at the general expense, who measure everything by a foreign standard, and who exercise their authority without cordiality or sympathy?

REGENT. You take part with our opponents?

MACHIAVEL. Assuredly not in my heart. Would that with my understanding I could be wholly on our side!

REGENT. If such your disposition, it were better I should resign the regency to them; for both Egmont and Orange entertained great hopes of occupying this position. Then they were adversaries, now they are leagued against me, and have become friends—inseparable friends.

MACHIAVEL. A dangerous pair.

REGENT. To speak candidly, I fear Orange.—I fear for Egmont.—Orange meditates some dangerous scheme, his thoughts are far-reaching, he is reserved, appears to accede to everything, never contradicts, and while maintaining the show of reverence, with clear foresight accomplishes his own designs.

MACHIAVEL. Egmont, on the contrary, advances with a bold step, as if the world were all his own.

REGENT. He bears his head as proudly as if the hand of majesty were not suspended over him.

MACHIAVEL. The eyes of all the people are fixed upon him, and he is the idol of their hearts.

REGENT. He has never assumed the least disguise, and carries himself as if no one had a right to call him to account. He still bears the name of Egmont. Count Egmont is the title by which he loves to hear himself addressed, as though he would fain be reminded that his ancestors were masters of Guelderland. Why does he not assume his proper title,—Prince of Gaure? What object has he in view? Would he again revive extinguished claims?

MACHIAVEL. I hold him for a faithful servant of the king.

REGENT. Were he so inclined, what important service could he not render to the government? Whereas now, without benefitting himself, he has caused us unspeakable vexation. His banquets and entertainments have done more to unite the nobles and to knit them together than the most dangerous secret associations. With his toasts, his guests have drunk in a permanent intoxication, a giddy frenzy, that never subsides. How often have his facetious jests stirred up the minds of the populace? and what an excitement was produced among the mob by the new liveries, and the extravagant devices of his followers!

MACHIAVEL. I am convinced he had no design.

REGENT. Be that as it may, it is bad enough. As I said before, he injures us without benefitting himself. He treats as a jest matters of serious import; and, not to appear negligent and remiss, we are forced to treat seriously what he intended as a jest. Thus one urges on the other; and what we are endeavouring to avert is actually brought to pass. He is more dangerous than the acknowledged head of a conspiracy; and I am much mistaken if it is not all remembered against him at court. I cannot deny that scarcely a day passes in which he does not wound me—deeply wound me.

MACHIAVEL. He appears to me to act on all occasions according to the dictates of his conscience.

REGENT. His conscience has a convenient mirror. His demeanour is often offensive. He carries himself as if he felt he were the master here, and were withheld by courtesy alone from making us feel his supremacy; as if he would not exactly drive us out of the country; there'll be no need for that.

MACHIAVEL. I entreat you, put not too harsh a construction upon his frank and joyous temper, which treats lightly matters of serious moment. You but injure yourself and him.

REGENT. I interpret nothing. I speak only of inevitable consequences, and I know him. His patent of nobility and the Golden Fleece upon his breast strengthen his confidence, his audacity. Both can protect him against any sudden outbreak of royal displeasure. Consider the matter closely, and he is alone responsible for the whole mischief that has broken out in Flanders. From the first, he connived at the proceedings of the foreign teachers, avoided stringent measures, and perhaps rejoiced in secret that they gave us so much to do. Let me alone; on this occasion, I will give utterance to that which weighs upon my heart; I will not shoot my arrow in vain. I know where he is vulnerable. For he is vulnerable.

MACHIAVEL. Have you summoned the council? Will Orange attend?

REGENT. I have sent for him to Antwerp. I will lay upon their shoulders the burden of responsibility; they shall either strenuously co-operate with me in quelling the evil, or at once declare themselves rebels. Let the letters be completed without delay, and bring them for my signature. Then hasten to despatch the trusty Vasco to Madrid; he is faithful and indefatigable; let him use all diligence, that he may not be anticipated by common report, that my brother may receive the intelligence first through him. I will myself speak with him ere he departs.

MACHIAVEL. Your orders shall be promptly and punctually obeyed.

SCENE III. *Citizen's House.*CLARA, *her* MOTHER, BRACKENBURG.

CLARA. Will you not hold the yarn for me, Brackenburg?

BRACKENBURG. I entreat you, excuse me, Clara.

CLARA. What ails you? Why refuse me this trifling service?

BRACKENBURG. When I hold the yarn, I stand as it were spell-bound before you, and cannot escape your eyes.

CLARA. Nonsense! Come and hold!

MOTHER (*knitting in her arm-chair*). Give us a song! Brackenburg sings so good a second. You used to be merry once, and I had always something to laugh at.

BRACKENBURG. Once!

CLARA. Well, let us sing.

BRACKENBURG. As you please.

CLARA. Merrily, then, and sing away! 'Tis a soldier's song, my favourite.

(*She winds yarn, and sings with* BRACKENBURG.)

The drum is resounding,
And shrill the fife plays;
My love, for the battle,
His brave troop arrays;
He lifts his lance high,
And the people he sways.
My blood it is boiling!
My heart throbs pit-pat!
Oh, had I a jacket,
With hose and with hat!

How boldly I'd follow,
And march through the gate;
Through all the wide province
I'd follow him straight.
The foe yield, we capture
Or shoot them! Ah, me!
What heart-thrilling rapture
A soldier to be!

(During the song, BRACKENBURG has frequently looked at CLARA; at length his voice falters, his eyes fill with tears, he lets the skein fall, and goes to the window. CLARA finishes the song alone, her mother motions to her, half displeased, she rises, advances a few steps towards him, turns back, as if irresolute, and again sits down.)

MOTHER. What is going on in the street, Brackenburg? I hear soldiers marching.

BRACKENBURG. It is the Regent's body-guard.

CLARA. At this hour? What can it mean? (She rises and joins BRACKENBURG at the window.) That is not the daily guard; it is more numerous! almost all the troops! Oh, Brackenburg, go! Learn what it means. It must be something unusual. Go, good Brackenburg, do me this favour.

BRACKENBURG. I am going! I will return immediately (He offers his hand to CLARA, and she gives him hers.)

[Exit BRACKENBURG.]

MOTHER. Thou sendest him away so soon!

CLARA. I am curious; and, besides—do not be angry, mother—his presence pains me. I never know how I ought to behave towards him. I have done him a wrong, and it goes to my very heart to see how deeply he feels it. Well, it can't be helped now!

MOTHER. He is such a true-hearted fellow!

CLARA. I cannot help it, I must treat him kindly. Often, without a thought, I return the gentle, loving pressure of his hand. I reproach myself that I am deceiving him, that I am nourishing in his heart a vain hope. I am in a sad plight! God knows, I do not willingly deceive him. I do not wish him to hope, yet I cannot let him despair!

MOTHER. That is not as it should be.

CLARA. I liked him once, and in my soul I like him still. I could have married him; yet I believe I was never really in love with him.

MOTHER. Thou wouldst always have been happy with him.

CLARA. I should have been provided for, and have led a quiet life.

MOTHER. And through thy fault it has all been trifled away.

CLARA. I am in a strange position. When I think how

it has come to pass, I know it, indeed, and I know it not. But I have only to look upon Egmont, and I understand it all; ay, and stranger things would seem natural then. Oh, what a man he is! All the provinces worship him. And in his arms, should I not be the happiest creature in the world?

MOTHER. And how will it be in the future?

CLARA. I only ask, does he love me?—does he love me?—as if there were any doubt about it.

MOTHER. One has nothing but anxiety of heart with one's children. Always care and sorrow, whatever may be the end of it! It cannot come to good! Thou hast made thyself wretched! Thou hast made thy mother wretched too.

CLARA (*quietly*). Yet thou didst allow it in the beginning.

MOTHER. Alas! I was too indulgent; I am always too indulgent.

CLARA. When Egmont rode by, and I ran to the window, did you chide me then? Did you not come to the window yourself? When he looked up, smiled, nodded, and greeted me, was it displeasing to you? Did you not feel yourself honoured in your daughter?

MOTHER. Go on with your reproaches.

CLARA (*with emotion*). Then, when he passed more frequently, and we felt sure that it was on my account that he came this way, did you not remark it yourself with secret joy? Did you call me away when I stood behind the window-pane and awaited him?

MOTHER. Could I imagine that it would go so far?

CLARA (*with faltering voice, and repressed tears*). And then, one evening, when, enveloped in his mantle, he surprised us as we sat at our lamp, who busied herself in receiving him, while I remained, lost in astonishment, as if fastened to my chair?

MOTHER. Could I imagine that the prudent Clara would so soon be carried away by this unhappy love? I must now endure that my daughter—

CLARA (*bursting into tears*). Mother! How can you? You take pleasure in tormenting me!

MOTHER (*weeping*). Ay, weep away! Make me yet more

wretched by thy grief. Is it not misery enough that my only daughter is a castaway?

CLARA (*rising, and speaking coldly*). A castaway! The beloved of Egmont a castaway!—What princess would not envy the poor Clara a place in his heart? Oh, mother, —my own mother, you were not wont to speak thus! Dear mother, be kind!—Let the people think, let the neighbours whisper what they like—this chamber, this lowly house is a paradise, since Egmont's love dwelt here.

MOTHER. One cannot help liking him, that is true. He is always so kind, frank, and open-hearted.

CLARA. There is not a drop of false blood in his veins. And then, mother, he is indeed the great Egmont; yet, when he comes to me, how tender he is, how kind! How he tries to conceal from me his rank, his bravery! How anxious he is about me! so entirely the man, the friend, the lover.

MOTHER. Do you expect him to-day?

CLARA. Have you not seen how often I go to the window? Have you not noticed how I listen to every noise at the door?—Though I know that he will not come before night, yet, from the time when I rise in the morning, I keep expecting him every moment. Were I but a boy, to follow him always, to the court and everywhere! Could I but carry his colours in the field!—

MOTHER. You were always such a lively, restless creature; even as a little child, now wild, now thoughtful. Will you not dress yourself a little better?

CLARA. Perhaps, mother, if I want something to do.—Yesterday, some of his people went by, singing songs in honour. At least his name was in the songs! The rest I could not understand. My heart leaped up into my throat,—I would fain have called them back if I had not felt ashamed.

MOTHER. Take care! Thy impetuous nature will ruin all. Thou wilt betray thyself before the people; as, not long ago, at thy cousin's, when thou foundest out the woodcut with the description, and didst exclaim, with a cry: "Count Egmont!"—I grew as red as fire.

CLARA. Could I help crying out? It was the battle of Gravelines, and I found in the picture the letter C. and then looked for it in the description below. There it

stood, "Count Egmont, with his horse shot under him." I shuddered, and afterwards I could not help laughing at the woodcut figure of Egmont, as tall as the neighbouring tower of Gravelines, and the English ships at the side.—When I remember how I used to conceive of a battle, and what an idea I had, as a girl, of Count Egmont; when I listened to descriptions of him, and of all the other earls and princes;—and think how it is with me now!

Enter BRACKENBURG.

CLARA. Well, what is going on?

BRACKENBURG. Nothing certain is known. It is rumoured that an insurrection has lately broken out in Flanders; the Regent is afraid of its spreading here. The castle is strongly garrisoned, the burghers are crowding to the gates, and the streets are thronged with people. I will hasten at once to my old father. (*As if about to go.*)

CLARA. Shall we see you to-morrow? I must change my dress a little. I am expecting my cousin, and I look too untidy. Come, mother, help me a moment. Take the book, Brackenburg, and bring me such another story.

MOTHER. Farewell.

BRACKENBURG (*extending his hand*). Your hand!

CLARA (*refusing hers*). When you come next.

[*Exeunt MOTHER and DAUGHTER.*]

BRACKENBURG (*alone*). I had resolved to go away again at once; and yet, when she takes me at my word, and lets me leave her, I feel as if I could go mad.—Wretched man! Does the fate of thy fatherland, does the growing disturbance fail to move thee?—Are countryman and Spaniard the same to thee? and carest thou not who rules, and who is in the right?—I was a different sort of fellow as a schoolboy!—Then, when an exercise in oratory was given; "Brutus' Speech for Liberty," for instance, Fritz was ever the first, and the rector would say: "If it were only spoken more deliberately, the words not all huddled together."—Then my blood boiled, and longed for action.—Now I drag along, bound by the eyes of a maiden. I cannot leave her! yet she, alas, cannot love me!—ah—no—she—she cannot have entirely rejected me—not entirely—yet half love is no love!—I

will endure it no longer!—Can it be true what a friend lately whispered in my ear, that she secretly admits a man into the house by night, when she always sends me away modestly before evening? No, it cannot be true! It is a lie! A base, slanderous lie! Clara is as innocent as I am wretched.—She has rejected me, has thrust me from her heart—and shall I live on thus? I cannot, I will not endure it. Already my native land is convulsed by internal strife, and do I perish abjectly amid the tumult? I will not endure it! When the trumpet sounds, when a shot falls, it thrills through my bone and marrow! But, alas, it does not rouse me! It does not summon me to join the onslaught, to rescue, to dare.—Wretched, degrading position! Better end it at once! Not long ago, I threw myself into the water; I sank—but nature in her agony was too strong for me; I felt that I could swim, and saved myself against my will. Could I but forget the time when she loved me, seemed to love me!—Why has this happiness penetrated my very bone and marrow? Why have these hopes, while disclosing to me a distant paradise, consumed all the enjoyment of life?—And that first, that only kiss!—Here (*laying his hand upon the table*), here we were alone,—she had always been kind and friendly towards me,—then she seemed to soften,—she looked at me,—my brain reeled,—I felt her lips on mine,—and—and now?—Die, wretch! Why dost thou hesitate? (*He draws a phial from his pocket.*) Thou healing poison, it shall not have been in vain that I stole thee from my brother's medicine chest! From this anxious fear, this dizziness, this death-agony, thou shalt deliver me at once.

ACT II.

SCENE I. *Square in Brussels.*

JETTER and a MASTER CARPENTER (*meeting*).

CARPENTER. Did I not tell you beforehand? Eight days ago, at the guild, I said there would be serious disturbances?

JETTER. Is it, then, true that they have plundered the churches in Flanders?

CARPENTER. They have utterly destroyed both churches and chapels. They have left nothing standing but the four bare walls. The lowest rabble! And this it is that damages our good cause. We ought rather to have laid our claims before the Regent, formally and decidedly, and then have stood by them. If we speak now, if we assemble now, it will be said that we are joining the insurgents.

JETTER. Ay, so every one thinks at first. Why should you thrust your nose into the mess? The neck is closely connected with it.

CARPENTER. I am always uneasy when tumults arise among the mob—among people who have nothing to lose. They use as a pretext that to which we also must appeal, and plunge the country in misery.

Enter SOEST.

SOEST. Good day, sirs! What news? Is it true that the image-breakers are coming straight in this direction?

CARPENTER. Here they shall touch nothing, at any rate.

SOEST. A soldier came into my shop just now to buy tobacco; I questioned him about the matter. The Regent, though so brave and prudent a lady, has for once lost her presence of mind. Things must be bad indeed when she thus takes refuge behind her guards. The castle is strongly garrisoned. It is even rumoured that she means to fly from the town.

CARPENTER. Forth she shall not go! Her presence protects us, and we will ensure her safety better than her mustachioed gentry. If she only maintains our rights and privileges, we will stand faithfully by her.

Enter a SOAPBOILER.

SOAPBOILER. An ugly business this! a bad business! Troubles are beginning; all things are going wrong! Mind you keep quiet, or they'll take you also for rioters.

SOEST. Here come the seven wise men of Greece.

SOAPBOILER. I know there are many who in secret hold with the Calvinists, abuse the bishops, and care not for the king. But a loyal subject, a sincere Catholic!—

(By degrees others join the speakers, and listen.)

Enter VANSSEN.

VANSSEN. God save you, sirs! What news?

CARPENTER. Have nothing to do with him, he's a dangerous fellow.

JETTER. Is he not secretary to Dr. Wiets?

CARPENTER. He has already had several masters. First he was a clerk, and as one patron after another turned him off, on account of his roguish tricks, he now dabbles in the business of notary and advocate, and is a brandy-drinker to boot. (*More people gather round and stand in groups.*)

VANSSEN. So here you are, putting your heads together. Well, it is worth talking about.

SOEST. I think so too.

VANSSEN. Now if only one of you had heart and another head enough for the work, we might break the Spanish fetters at once.

SOEST. Sirs! you must not talk thus. We have taken our oath to the king.

VANSSEN. And the king to us. Mark that!

JETTER. There's sense in that? Tell us your opinion.

OTHERS. Hearken to him; he's a clever fellow. He's sharp enough.

VANSSEN. I had an old master once, who possessed a collection of parchments, among which were charters of ancient constitutions, contracts, and privileges. He set great store, too, by the rarest books. One of these contained our whole constitution; how, at first, we Netherlanders had princes of our own, who governed according to hereditary laws, rights, and usages; how our ancestors paid due honour to their sovereign so long as he governed them equitably; and how they were immediately on their guard the moment he was for overstepping his bounds. The states were down upon him at once; for every province, however small, had its own chamber and representatives.

CARPENTER. Hold your tongue! We knew that long ago! Every honest citizen learns as much about the constitution as he needs.

JETTER. Let him speak; one may always learn something.

SOEST. He is quite right.

SEVERAL CITIZENS. Go on! Go on! One does not hear this every day.

VANSEN. You citizens, forsooth! You live only in the present; and as you tamely follow the trade inherited from your fathers, so you let the government do with you just as it pleases. You make no inquiry into the origin, the history, or the rights of a Regent; and in consequence of this negligence, the Spaniard has drawn the net over your ears.

SOEST. Who cares for that, if one has only daily bread?

JETTER. The devil! Why did not some one come forward and tell us this in time?

VANSEN. I tell it you now. The King of Spain, whose good fortune it is to bear sway over these provinces, has no right to govern them otherwise than the petty princes who formerly possessed them separately. Do you understand that?

JETTER. Explain it to us.

VANSEN. Why, it is as clear as the sun. Must you not be governed according to your provincial laws? How comes that?

A CITIZEN. Certainly!

VANSEN. Has not the burgher of Brussels a different law from the burgher of Antwerp? The burgher of Antwerp from the burgher of Ghent? How comes that?

ANOTHER CITIZEN. By heaven!

VANSEN. But if you let matters run on thus, they will soon tell you a different story. Fie on you! Philip, through a woman, now ventures to do what neither Charles the Bold, Frederick the Warrior, nor Charles the Fifth could accomplish.

SOEST. Yes, yes! The old princes tried it also.

VANSEN. Ay! But our ancestors kept a sharp look-out. If they thought themselves aggrieved by their sovereign, they would perhaps get his son and heir into their hands, detain him as a hostage, and surrender him only on the most favourable conditions. Our fathers were men! They knew their own interests! They knew how to lay hold on what they wanted, and to get it established! They were men of the right sort; and hence it is that our privileges are so clearly defined, our liberties so well secured.

SOEST. What are you saying about our liberties?

ALL. Our liberties! our privileges! Tell us about our privileges.

VANSEN. All the provinces have their peculiar advantages, but we of Brabant are the most splendidly provided for. I have read it all.

SOEST. Say on.

JETTER. Let us hear.

A CITIZEN. Pray do.

VANSEN. First, it stands written:—The Duke of Brabant shall be to us a good and faithful sovereign.

SOEST. Good! Stands it so?

JETTER. Faithful? Is that true?

VANSEN. As I tell you. He is bound to us as we are to him. Secondly: In the exercise of his authority he shall neither exert arbitrary power, nor exhibit caprice, himself, nor shall he, either directly or indirectly, sanction them in others.

JETTER. Bravo! Bravo! Not exert arbitrary power.

SOEST. Nor exhibit caprice.

ANOTHER. And not sanction them in others! That is the main point. Not sanction them, either directly or indirectly.

VANSEN. In express words.

JETTER. Get us the book.

A CITIZEN. Yes, we must see it.

OTHERS. The book! The book!

ANOTHER. We will to the Regent with the book.

ANOTHER. Sir doctor, you shall be spokesman.

SOAPBOILER. Oh, the dolts!

OTHERS. Something more out of the book!

SOAPBOILER. I'll knock his teeth down his throat if he says another word.

PEOPLE. We'll see who dares to lay hands upon him. Tell us about our privileges! Have we any more privileges?

VANSEN. Many, very good and very wholesome ones too. Thus it stands: The sovereign shall neither benefit the clergy, nor increase their number, without the consent of the nobles and of the states. Mark that! Nor shall he alter the constitution of the country.

SOEST. Stands it so?

VANSEN. I'll show it you, as it was written down two or three centuries ago.

A CITIZEN. And we tolerate the new bishops? The nobles must protect us, we will make a row else!

OTHERS. And we suffer ourselves to be intimidated by the Inquisition?

VANSEN. It is your own fault.

PEOPLE. We have Egmont! We have Orange! They will protect our interests.

VANSEN. Your brothers in Flanders are beginning the good work.

SOAPBOILER. Dog!

(*Strikes him.*)

OTHERS *oppose the SOAPBOILER, and exclaim*, Are you also a Spaniard?

ANOTHER. What! This honourable man?

ANOTHER. This learned man?

(*They attack the SOAPBOILER.*)

CARPENTER. For heaven's sake, peace!

(*Others mingle in the fray.*)

CARPENTER. Citizens, what means this?

(*Boys whistle, throw stones, set on dogs; citizens stand and gape, people come running up, others walk quietly to and fro, others play all sorts of pranks, shout and huzza.*)

OTHERS. Freedom and privilege! Privilege and freedom!

Enter EGDMONT, with followers.

EGDMONT. Peace! Peace! good people. What is the matter? Peace, I say! Separate them.

CARPENTER. My good lord, you come like an angel from heaven. Hush! See you nothing? Count Egmont! Honour to Count Egmont!

EGDMONT. Here, too! What are you about? Burgher against burgher! Does not even the neighbourhood of our royal mistress oppose a barrier to this frenzy? Disperse yourselves, and go about your business. 'Tis a bad sign when you thus keep holiday on working days. How did the disturbance begin?

(*The tumult gradually subsides, and the people gather around EGDMONT.*)

CARPENTER. They are fighting about their privileges.

EGMONT. Which they will forfeit through their own folly—and who are you? You seem honest people.

CARPENTER. 'Tis our wish to be so.

EGMONT. Your calling?

CARPENTER. A carpenter, and master of the guild.

EGMONT. And you?

SOEST. A shopkeeper.

EGMONT. And you?

JETTER. A tailor.

EGMONT. I remember, you were employed upon the liveries of my people. Your name is Jetter.

JETTER. To think of your grace remembering it!

EGMONT. I do not easily forget any one whom I have seen or conversed with. Do what you can, good people, to keep the peace; you stand in bad repute enough already. Provoke not the king still farther. The power, after all, is in his hands. An honest burgher, who maintains himself industriously, has everywhere as much freedom as he wants.

CARPENTER. That now is just our misfortune! With all due deference, your grace, 'tis the idle portion of the community, your drunkards and vagabonds, who quarrel for want of something to do, and clamour about privilege because they are hungry; they impose upon the curious and the credulous, and, in order to obtain a pot of beer, excite disturbances that will bring misery upon thousands. That is just what they want. We keep our houses and chests too well guarded; they would fain drive us away from them with fire-brands.

EGMONT. You shall have all needful assistance; measures have been taken to stem the evil by force. Make a firm stand against the new doctrines, and do not imagine that privileges are secured by sedition. Remain at home; suffer no crowds to assemble in the streets. Sensible people can accomplish much.

(In the meantime the crowd has for the most part dispersed.)

CARPENTER. Thanks, your excellency—thanks for your good opinion! We will do what in us lies. *(Exit EGMONT.)* A gracious lord! A true Netherlander. Nothing of the Spaniard about him.

JETTER. If we had only him for a regent? 'Tis a pleasure to follow him.

SOEST. The king won't hear of that. He takes care to appoint his own people to the place.

JETTER. Did you notice his dress? It was of the newest fashion—after the Spanish cut.

CARPENTER. A handsome gentleman.

JETTER. His head now were a dainty morsel for a headsman.

SOEST. Are you mad? What are you thinking about?

JETTER. It is stupid enough that such an idea should come into one's head! But so it is. Whenever I see a fine long neck, I cannot help thinking how well it would suit the block. These cursed executions! One cannot get them out of one's head. When the lads are swimming, and I chance to see a naked back, I think forthwith of the dozens I have seen beaten with rods. If I meet a portly gentleman, I fancy I already see him roasting at the stake. At night, in my dreams, I am tortured in every limb; one cannot have a single hour's enjoyment; all merriment and fun have long been forgotten. These terrible images seem burnt in upon my brain.

SCENE II. EGMONT'S residence.

His SECRETARY (at a desk with papers. He rises impatiently).

SECRETARY. Still he comes not! And I have been waiting already full two hours, pen in hand, the paper before me; and just to-day I was anxious to be out so early. The floor burns under my feet. I can with difficulty restrain my impatience. "Be punctual to the hour." Such was his parting injunction; now he comes not. There is so much business to get through, I shall not have finished before midnight. He overlooks one's faults, it is true; methinks it would be better though, were he more strict, so he dismissed one at the appointed time. One could then arrange one's plans. It is now full two hours since he left the Regent; who knows whom he may have chanced to meet by the way?

Enter EGMONT.

EGMONT. Well, how do matters look?

SECRETARY. I am ready, and three couriers are waiting.

EGMONT. I have detained you too long; you look somewhat out of humour.

SECRETARY. In obedience to your command I have already been in attendance for some time. Here are the papers!

EGMONT. Donna Elvira will be angry with me, when she learns that I have detained you.

SECRETARY. You are pleased to jest.

EGMONT. No, no. Be not ashamed. I admire your taste. She is pretty, and I have no objection that you should have a friend at the castle. What say the letters?

SECRETARY. Much, my lord, but withal little that is satisfactory.

EGMONT. 'Tis well that we have pleasures at home, we have the less occasion to seek them from abroad. Is there much that requires attention?

SECRETARY. Enough, my lord; three couriers are in attendance.

EGMONT. Proceed! The most important.

SECRETARY. All is important.

EGMONT. One after the other; only be prompt.

SECRETARY. Captain Breda sends an account of the occurrences that have further taken place in Ghent and the surrounding districts. The tumult is for the most part allayed.

EGMONT. He doubtless reports individual acts of folly and temerity?

SECRETARY. He does, my lord.

EGMONT. Spare me the recital.

SECRETARY. Six of the mob who tore down the image of the Virgin at Verviers have been arrested. He inquires whether they are to be hanged like the others.

EGMONT. I am weary of hanging; let them be flogged and discharged.

SECRETARY. There are two women among them; are they to be flogged also?

EGMONT. He may admonish them and let them go.

SECRETARY. Brink, of Breda's company, wants to marry; the captain hopes you will not allow it. There are so many women among the troops, he writes, that when on the march, they resemble a gang of gipsies rather than regular soldiers.

EGMONT. We must overlook it in his case. He is a fine young fellow, and moreover entreated me so earnestly before I came away. This must be the last time, however; though it grieves me to refuse the poor fellows their best pastime; they have enough without that to torment them.

SECRETARY. Two of your people, Seter and Hart, have ill-treated a damsel, the daughter of an inn-keeper. They got her alone and she could not escape from them.

EGMONT. If she be an honest maiden and they used violence, let them be flogged three days in succession; and if they have any property, let him retain as much of it as will portion the girl.

SECRETARY. One of the foreign preachers has been discovered passing secretly through Comines. He swore that he was on the point of leaving for France. According to orders, he ought to be beheaded.

EGMONT. Let him be conducted quietly to the frontier, and there admonished that, the next time, he will not escape so easily.

SECRETARY. A letter from your steward. He writes that money comes in slowly, he can with difficulty send you the required sum within the week; the late disturbances have thrown everything into the greatest confusion.

EGMONT. Money must be had! It is for him to look to the means.

SECRETARY. He says he will do his utmost, and at length proposes to sue and imprison Raymond, who has been so long in your debt.

EGMONT. But he has promised to pay!

SECRETARY. The last time he fixed a fortnight himself.

EGMONT. Well, grant him another fortnight; after that he may proceed against him.

SECRETARY. You do well. His non-payment of the money proceeds not from inability, but from want of inclination. He will trifle no longer when he sees that you are in earnest. The steward further proposes to with-

hold, for half a month, the pensions which you allow to the old soldiers, widows, and others. In the meantime some expedient may be devised; they must make their arrangements accordingly.

EGMONT. But what arrangements can be made here? These poor people want the money more than I do. He must not think of it.

SECRETARY. How then, my lord, is he to raise the required sum?

EGMONT. It is his business to think of that. He was told so in a former letter.

SECRETARY. And therefore he makes these proposals.

EGMONT. They will never do;—he must think of something else. Let him suggest expedients that are admissible, and, before all, let him procure the money.

SECRETARY. I have again before me the letter from Count Oliva. Pardon my recalling it to your remembrance. Before all others, the aged count deserves a detailed reply. You proposed writing to him with your own hand. Doubtless, he loves you as a father.

EGMONT. I cannot command the time;—and of all detestable things, writing is to me the most detestable. You imitate my hand so admirably, do you write in my name. I am expecting Orange. I cannot do it;—I wish, however, that something soothing should be written, to allay his fears.

SECRETARY. Just give me a notion of what you wish to communicate; I will at once draw up the answer, and lay it before you. It shall be so written that it might pass for your hand in a court of justice.

EGMONT. Give me the letter. (*After glancing over it.*) Dear, excellent, old man! Wert thou then so cautious in thy youth? Didst thou never mount a breach? Didst thou remain in the rear of battle at the suggestion of prudence?—What affectionate solicitude! He has indeed my safety and happiness at heart, but considers not, that he who lives but to save his life, is already dead.—Charge him not to be anxious on my account; I act as circumstances require, and shall be upon my guard. Let him use his influence at court in my favour, and be assured of my warmest thanks.

summons the provinces to arms, that justifies every cruelty for which Spain has hitherto so anxiously sought a pretext. With a single nod you will excite to the direst confusion what, with patient effort, we have so long kept in abeyance. Think of the towns, the nobles, the people; think of commerce, agriculture, trade! Realize the murder, the desolation! Calmly the soldier beholds his comrade fall beside him in the battle-field. But towards you, carried downwards by the stream, shall float the corpses of citizens, of children, of maidens, till, aghast with horror, you shall no longer know whose cause you are defending, since you shall see those, for whose liberty you drew the sword, perishing around you. And what will be your emotions when conscience whispers, "It was for my own safety that I drew it"?

ORANGE. We are not ordinary men, Egmont. If it becomes us to sacrifice ourselves for thousands, it becomes us no less to spare ourselves for thousands.

EGMONT. He who spares himself becomes an object of suspicion ever to himself.

ORANGE. He who is sure of his own motives can, with confidence, advance or retreat.

EGMONT. Your own act will render certain the evil that you dread.

ORANGE. Wisdom and courage alike prompt us to meet an inevitable evil.

EGMONT. When the danger is imminent the faintest hope should be taken into account.

ORANGE. We have not the smallest footing left; we are on the very brink of the precipice.

EGMONT. Is the king's favour on ground so narrow?

ORANGE. Not narrow, perhaps, but slippery.

EGMONT. By heavens! he is belied. I cannot endure that he should be so meanly thought of! He is Charles's son, and incapable of meanness.

ORANGE. Kings of course do nothing mean.

EGMONT. He should be better known.

ORANGE. Our knowledge counsels us not to wait the result of a dangerous experiment.

EGMONT. No experiment is dangerous, the result of which we have the courage to meet.

ORANGE You are irritated, Egmont.

EGMONT. I must see with my own eyes.

ORANGE. Oh that for once you saw with mine! My friend, because your eyes are open, you imagine that you see. I go! Await Alva's arrival, and God be with you! My refusal to do so may perhaps save you. The dragon may deem the prey not worth seizing, if he cannot swallow us both. Perhaps he may delay, in order more surely to execute his purpose; in the meantime you may see matters in their true light. But then, be prompt! Lose not a moment! Save,—oh, save yourself! Farewell!—Let nothing escape your vigilance:—how many troops he brings with him; how he garrisons the town; what force the Regent retains; how your friends are prepared. Send me tidings—Egmont—

EGMONT. What would you?

ORANGE (*grasping his hand*). Be persuaded! Go with me!

EGMONT. How! Tears, Orange!

ORANGE. To weep for a lost friend is not unmanly.

EGMONT. You deem me lost?

ORANGE. You are lost! Consider! Only a brief respite is left you. Farewell. [*Exit.*]

EGMONT (*alone*). Strange that the thoughts of other men should exert such an influence over us. These fears would never have entered my mind; and this man infects me with his solicitude. Away! 'Tis a foreign drop in my blood! Kind nature, cast it forth! And to erase the furrowed lines from my brow there yet remains indeed a friendly means.

ACT III.

SCENE I. *Palace of the Regent.*

MARGARET OF PARMA.

REGENT. I might have expected it. Ha! when we live immersed in anxiety and toil, we imagine that we achieve the utmost that is possible; while he, who, from a distance, looks on and commands, believes that he

requires only the possible. O ye kings! I had not thought it could have galled me thus. It is so sweet to reign!—and to abdicate? I know not how my father could do so; but I will also.

MACHIAVEL appears in the back-ground.

REGENT. Approach, Machiavel. I am thinking over this letter from my brother.

MACHIAVEL. May I know what it contains?

REGENT. As much tender consideration for me as anxiety for his states. He extols the firmness, the industry, the fidelity, with which I have hitherto watched over the interests of his Majesty in these provinces. He condoles with me that the unbridled people occasion me so much trouble. He is so thoroughly convinced of the depth of my views, so extraordinarily satisfied with the prudence of my conduct, that I must almost say the letter is too politely written for a king—certainly for a brother.

MACHIAVEL. It is not the first time that he has testified to you his just satisfaction.

REGENT. But the first time that it is a mere rhetorical figure.

MACHIAVEL. I do not understand you.

REGENT. You soon will.—For after this preamble he is of opinion that without soldiers, without a small army indeed,—I shall always cut a sorry figure here! We did wrong, he says, to withdraw our troops from the provinces at the remonstrance of the inhabitants; a garrison, he thinks, which shall press upon the neck of the burgher, will prevent him, by its weight, from making any lofty spring.

MACHIAVEL. It would irritate the public mind to the last degree.

REGENT. The king thinks, however, do you hear?—he thinks that a clever general, one who never listens to reason, will be able to deal promptly with all parties;—people and nobles, citizens and peasants; he therefore sends, with a powerful army, the Duke of Alva.

MACHIAVEL. Alva?

REGENT. You are surprised.

MACHIAVEL. You say, he sends, he asks doubtless whether he should send.

REGENT. The king asks not, he sends.

MACHIAVEL. You will then have an experienced warrior in your service.

REGENT. In my service? Speak out Machiavel.

MACHIAVEL. I would not anticipate you.

REGENT. And I would I could dissimulate. It wounds me—wounds me to the quick. I had rather my brother would speak his mind than attach his signature to formal epistles drawn up by a secretary of state.

MACHIAVEL. Can they not comprehend?—

REGENT. I know them both within and without. They would fain make a clean sweep; and since they cannot set about it themselves, they give their confidence to any one who comes with a besom in his hand. Oh, it seems to me as if I saw the king and his council worked upon this tapestry.

MACHIAVEL. So distinctly!

REGENT. No feature is wanting. There are good men among them. The honest Roderigo, so experienced and so moderate, who does not aim too high, yet lets nothing sink too low; the upright Alonzo, the diligent Freneda, the steadfast Las Vargas, and others who join them when the good party are in power. But there sits the hollow-eyed Toledan, with brazen front and deep fire-glance, muttering between his teeth about womanish softness, ill-timed concession, and that women can ride trained steeds well enough, but are themselves bad masters of the horse, and the like pleasantries, which, in former times, I have been compelled to hear from political gentlemen.

MACHIAVEL. You have chosen good colours for your picture.

REGENT. Confess, Machiavel, among the tints from which I might select, there is no hue so livid, so jaundice-like, as Alva's complexion, and the colour he is wont to paint with. He regards every one as a blasphemer or traitor; for under this head they can all be racked, impaled, quartered, and burnt at pleasure. The good I have accomplished here appears as nothing seen from a distance, just because it is good. Then he dwells on every outbreak that is past, recalls every disturbance that is quieted, and brings before the king such a picture of

mutiny, sedition, and audacity, that we appear to him to be actually devouring one another, when with us the transient explosion of a rude people has long been forgotten. Thus he conceives a cordial hatred for the poor people; he views them with horror, as beasts and monsters; looks around for fire and sword, and imagines that by such means human beings are subdued.

MACHIAVEL. You appear to me too vehement; you take the matter too seriously. Do you not remain Regent?

REGENT. I am aware of that. He will bring his instructions. I am old enough in state affairs to understand how people can be supplanted, without being actually deprived of office. First, he will produce a commission, couched in terms somewhat obscure and equivocal; he will stretch his authority, for the power is in his hands; if I complain, he will hint at secret instructions; if I desire to see them, he will answer evasively; if I insist, he will produce a paper of totally different import; and if this fail to satisfy me, he will go on precisely as if I had never interfered. Meanwhile he will have accomplished what I dread, and have frustrated my most cherished schemes.

MACHIAVEL. I wish I could contradict you.

REGENT. His harshness and cruelty will again arouse the turbulent spirit, which, with unspeakable patience, I have succeeded in quelling; I shall see my work destroyed before my eyes, and have besides to bear the blame of his wrong-doing.

MACHIAVEL. Await it, your Highness.

REGENT. I have sufficient self-command to remain quiet. Let him come; I will make way for him with the best grace ere he pushes me aside.

MACHIAVEL. So important a step thus suddenly?

REGENT. 'Tis harder than you imagine. He who is accustomed to rule, to hold daily in his hand the destiny of thousands, descends from the throne as into the grave. Better thus, however, than linger a spectre among the living, and with hollow aspect endeavour to maintain a place which another has inherited, and already possesses and enjoys.

SCENE II. CLARA'S dwelling.

CLARA and her MOTHER.

MOTHER. Such a love as Brackenburgh's I have never seen; I thought it was to be found only in romance books.

CLARA (*walking up and down the room, humming a song*).

With love's thrilling rapture
What joy can compare!

MOTHER. He suspects thy attachment to Egmont; and yet, if thou wouldst but treat him a little kindly, I do believe he would marry thee still, if thou wouldst have him.

CLARA (*sings*).

Blissful
And tearful,
With thought-teeming brain;
Hoping
And fearing
In passionate pain;
Now shouting in triumph,
Now sunk in despair;—
With love's thrilling rapture
What joy can compare!

MOTHER. Have done with such baby-nonsense!

CLARA. Nay, do not abuse it; 'tis a song of marvellous virtue. Many a time have I lulled a grown child to sleep with it.

MOTHER. Ay! Thou canst think of nothing but thy love. If it only did not put everything else out of thy head. Thou shouldst have more regard for Brackenburgh, I tell thee. He may make thee happy yet some day.

CLARA. He?

MOTHER. Oh, yes! A time will come! You children live only in the present, and give no ear to our experience. Youth and happy love, all has an end; and there comes a time when one thanks God if one has any corner to creep into.

CLARA (*shudders, and after a pause stands up*). Mother, let that time come—like death. To think of it beforehand is horrible! And if it come! If we must—then—we will bear ourselves as we may. Live without thee, Egmont! (*Weeping.*) No! It is impossible.

Enter EGMONT (*enveloped in a horseman's cloak, his hat drawn over his face*).

EGMONT. Clara!

CLARA (*utters a cry and starts back*). Egmont! (*She hastens towards him.*) Egmont! (*She embraces and leans upon him.*) O thou good, kind, sweet Egmont! Art thou come? Art thou here indeed!

EGMONT. Good evening, mother?

MOTHER. God save you, noble sir! My daughter has well-nigh pined to death, because you have stayed away so long; she talks and sings about you the live-long day.

EGMONT. You will give me some supper?

MOTHER. You do us too much honour. If we only had anything—

CLARA. Certainly! Be quiet, mother; I have provided everything; there is something prepared. Do not betray me, mother.

MOTHER. There's little enough.

CLARA. Never mind! And then I think when he is with me I am never hungry; so he cannot, I should think, have any great appetite when I am with him.

EGMONT. Do you think so? (*CLARA stamps with her foot and turns pettishly away.*) What ails you?

CLARA. How cold you are to-day! You have not yet offered me a kiss. Why do you keep your arms enveloped in your mantle, like a new-born babe? It becomes neither a soldier nor a lover to keep his arms muffled up.

EGMONT. Sometimes, dearest, sometimes. When the soldier stands in ambush and would delude the foe, he collects his thoughts, gathers his mantle around him, and matures his plan; and a lover—

MOTHER. Will you not take a seat, and make yourself comfortable? I must to the kitchen, Clara thinks of

nothing when you are here. You must put up with what we have.

EGMONT. Your good-will is the best seasoning.

[Exit MOTHER.]

CLARA. And what then is my love?

EGMONT. Just what thou wilt.

CLARA. Liken it to anything, if you have the heart.

EGMONT. But first. (*He flings aside his mantle, and appears arrayed in a magnificent dress.*)

CLARA. Oh heavens!

EGMONT. Now my arms are free! (*Embraces her.*)

CLARA. Don't! You will spoil your dress. (*She steps back.*) How magnificent! I dare not touch you.

EGMONT. Art thou satisfied? I promised to come once arrayed in Spanish fashion.

CLARA. I had ceased to remind you of it; I thought you did not like it—ah, and the Golden Fleece!

EGMONT. Thou seest it now.

CLARA. And did the emperor really hang it round thy neck!

EGMONT. He did, my child! And this chain and Order invest the wearer with the noblest privileges. On earth I acknowledge no judge over my actions, except the grand master of the Order, with the assembled chapter of knights.

CLARA. Oh, thou mightest let the whole world sit in judgment over thee. The velvet is too splendid! and the braiding! and the embroidery! One knows not where to begin.

EGMONT. There, look thy fill.

CLARA. And the Golden Fleece! You told me its history, and said it is the symbol of everything great and precious, of everything that can be merited and won by diligence and toil. It is very precious—I may liken it to thy love;—even so I wear it next my heart;—and then——

EGMONT. What wilt thou say?

CLARA. And then again it is not like.

EGMONT. How so?

CLARA. I have not won it by diligence and toil, I have not deserved it.

EGMONT. It is otherwise in love. Thou dost deserve it

because thou hast not sought it—and, for the most part, those only obtain love who seek it not.

CLARA. Is it from thine own experience that thou hast learned this? Didst thou make that proud remark in reference to thyself? Thou, whom all the people love?

EGMONT. Would that I had done something for them! That I could do anything for them! It is their own good pleasure to love me.

CLARA. Thou hast doubtless been with the Regent to-day?

EGMONT. I have.

CLARA. Art thou upon good terms with her?

EGMONT. So it would appear. We are kind and serviceable to each other.

CLARA. And in thy heart?

EGMONT. I like her. True, we have each our own views; but that is nothing to the purpose. She is an excellent woman, knows with whom she has to deal, and would be penetrating enough were she not quite so suspicious. I give her plenty of employment, because she is always suspecting some secret motive in my conduct when, in fact, I have none.

CLARA. Really none?

EGMONT. Well, with one little exception, perhaps. All wine deposits lees in the cask in the course of time. Orange furnishes her still better entertainment, and is a perpetual riddle. He has got the credit of harbouring some secret design; and she studies his brow to discover his thoughts, and his steps, to learn in what direction they are bent.

CLARA. Does she dissemble?

EGMONT. She is Regent—and do you ask?

CLARA. Pardon me; I meant to say, is she false?

EGMONT. Neither more nor less than everyone who has his own objects to attain.

CLARA. I should never feel at home in the world. But she has a masculine spirit, and is another sort of woman from us housewives and sempstresses. She is great, steadfast, resolute.

EGMONT. Yes, when matters are not too much involved. For once, however, she is a little disconcerted.

CLARA. How so?

EGMONT. She has a moustache, too, on her upper lip, and occasionally an attack of the gout. A regular Amazon.

CLARA. A majestic woman! I should dread to appear before her.

EGMONT. Yet thou art not wont to be timid! It would not be fear, only maidenly bashfulness.

(CLARA casts down her eyes, takes his hand, and leans upon him.)

EGMONT. I understand thee, dearest! Thou mayst raise thine eyes. (He kisses her eyes.)

CLARA. Let me be silent! Let me embrace thee! Let me look into thine eyes, and find there everything—hope and comfort, joy and sorrow! (She embraces and gazes on him.) Tell me! Oh, tell me! It seems so strange—art thou indeed Egmont! Count Egmont! The great Egmont, who makes so much noise in the world, who figures in the newspapers, who is the support and stay of the provinces?

EGMONT. No, Clara, I am not he.

CLARA. How?

EGMONT. Seest thou, Clara? Let me sit down! (He seats himself, she kneels on a footstool before him, rests her arms on his knees and looks up in his face.) That Egmont is a morose, cold, unbending Egmont, obliged to be upon his guard, to assume now this appearance and now that; harassed, misapprehended and perplexed, when the crowd esteem him light-hearted and gay; beloved by a people who do not know their own minds; honoured and extolled by the intractable multitude; surrounded by friends in whom he dares not confide; observed by men who are on the watch to supplant him; toiling and striving, often without an object, generally without a reward. O let me conceal how it fares with him, let me not speak of his feelings! But this Egmont, Clara, is calm, unreserved, happy, beloved and known by the best of hearts, which is also thoroughly known to him, and which he presses to his own with unbounded confidence and love. (He embraces her.) This is thy Egmont.

CLARA. So let me die! The world has no joy after this!

ACT IV.

SCENE I. *A Street.*

JETTER, CARPENTER.

JETTER. Hist! neighbour,—a word!

CARPENTER. Go your way and be quiet.

JETTER. Only one word. Is there nothing new?

CARPENTER. Nothing, except that we are anew forbidden to speak.

JETTER. How?

CARPENTER. Step here, close to this house. Take heed! Immediately on his arrival, the Duke of Alva published a decree, by which two or three, found conversing together in the streets, are, without trial, declared guilty of high treason.

JETTER. Alas!

CARPENTER. To speak of state affairs is prohibited on pain of perpetual imprisonment.

JETTER. Alas for our liberty!

CARPENTER. And no one, on pain of death, shall censure the measures of government.

JETTER. Alas, for our heads!

CARPENTER. And fathers, mothers, children, kindred, friends, and servants, are invited, by the promise of large rewards, to disclose what passes in the privacy of our homes, before an expressly appointed tribunal.

JETTER. Let us go home.

CARPENTER. And the obedient are promised that they shall suffer no injury, either in person or estate.

JETTER. How gracious!—I felt ill at ease the moment the duke entered the town. Since then, it has seemed to me, as though the heavens were covered with black crape, which hangs so low, that one must stoop down to avoid knocking one's head against it.

CARPENTER. And how do you like his soldiers? They are a different sort of crabs from those we have been used to.

JETTER. Faugh! It gives one the cramp at one's heart to see such a troop march down the street. As straight as tapers, with fixed look, only one step, however

many there may be; and when they stand sentinel, and you pass one of them, it seems as though he would look you through and through; and he looks so stiff and morose, that you fancy you see a task-master at every corner. They offend my sight. Our militia were merry fellows; they took liberties, stood their legs astride, their hats over their ears, they lived and let live; these fellows are like machines with a devil inside them.

CARPENTER. Were such an one to cry, "Halt!" and to level his musket, think you one would stand?

JETTER. I should fall dead upon the spot.

CARPENTER. Let us go home!

JETTER. No good can come of it. Farewell.

Enter SOEST.

SOEST. Friends! Neighbours!

CARPENTER. Hush! Let us go.

SOEST. Have you heard?

JETTER. Only too much!

SOEST. The Regent is gone.

JETTER. Then Heaven help us.

CARPENTER. She was some stay to us.

SOEST. Her departure was sudden and secret. She could not agree with the duke; she has sent word to the nobles that she intends to return. No one believes it, however.

CARPENTER. God pardon the nobles for letting this new yoke be laid upon our necks. They might have prevented it. Our privileges are gone.

JETTER. For Heaven's sake not a word about privileges. I already scent an execution; the sun will not come forth; the fogs are rank.

SOEST. Orange, too, is gone.

CARPENTER. Then are we quite deserted!

SOEST. Count Egmont is still here.

JETTER. God be thanked! Strengthen him, all ye saints, to do his utmost; he is the only one who can help us.

Enter VANSSEN.

VANSSEN. Have I at length found a few brave citizens who have not crept out of sight?

JETTER. Do us the favour to pass on.

VANSEN. You are not civil.

JETTER. This is no time for compliments. Does your back itch again? are your wounds already healed?

VANSEN. Ask a soldier about his wounds! Had I cared for blows, nothing good would have come of me.

JETTER. Matters may grow more serious.

VANSEN. You feel from the gathering storm a pitiful weakness in your limbs, it seems.

CARPENTER. Your limbs will soon be in motion elsewhere, if you do not keep quiet.

VANSEN. Poor mice! The master of the house procures a new cat, and ye are straight in despair! The difference is very trifling; we shall get on as we did before, only be quiet.

CARPENTER. You are an insolent knave.

VANSEN. Gossip! Let the duke alone. The old cat looks as though he had swallowed devils, instead of mice, and could not now digest them. Let him alone, I say; he must eat, drink, and sleep, like other men. I am not afraid if we only watch our opportunity. At first he makes quick work of it; by-and-by, however, he too will find that it is pleasanter to live in the larder, among fitches of bacon, and to rest by night, than to entrap a few solitary mice in the granary. Go to! I know the stadtholders.

CARPENTER. What such a fellow can say with impunity! Had I said such a thing, I should not hold myself safe a moment.

VANSEN. Do not make yourselves uneasy! God in heaven does not trouble himself about you, poor worms, much less the Regent.

JETTER. Slanderer!

VANSEN. I know some for whom it would be better if, instead of their own high spirits, they had a little tailor's blood in their veins.

CARPENTER. What mean you by that?

VANSEN. Hum! I mean the count.

JETTER. Egmont! What has he to fear?

VANSEN. I'm a poor devil, and could live a whole year round on what he loses in a single night; yet he would do

well to give me his revenue for a twelvemonth, to have my head upon his shoulders for one quarter of an hour.

JETTER. You think yourself very clever; yet there is more sense in the hairs of Egmont's head, than in your brains.

VANSEN. Perhaps so! Not more shrewdness, however. These gentry are the most apt to deceive themselves. He should be more chary of his confidence.

JETTER. How his tongue wags! Such a gentleman!

VANSEN. Just because he is not a tailor.

JETTER. You audacious scoundrel!

VANSEN. I only wish he had your courage in his limbs for an hour to make him uneasy, and plague and torment him, till he were compelled to leave the town.

JETTER. What nonsense you talk; why he's as safe as a star in heaven.

VANSEN. Have you ever seen one snuff itself out? Off it went!

CARPENTER. Who would dare to meddle with him?

VANSEN. Will you interfere to prevent it? Will you stir up an insurrection if he is arrested?

JETTER. Ah!

VANSEN. Will you risk your ribs for his sake?

SOEST. Eh!

VANSEN (*mimicking them*). Eh! Oh! Ah! Run through the alphabet in your wonderment. So it is, and so it will remain. Heaven help him!

JETTER. Confound your impudence. Can such a noble, upright man have anything to fear?

VANSEN. In this world the rogue has everywhere the advantage. At the bar, he makes a fool of the judge; on the bench, he takes pleasure in convicting the accused. I have had to copy out a protocol, where the commissary was handsomely rewarded by the court, both with praise and money, because through his cross-examination, an honest devil, against whom they had a grudge, was made out to be a rogue.

CARPENTER. Why, that again is a downright lie. What can they want to get out of a man if he is innocent?

VANSEN. Oh, you blockhead! When nothing can be

worked out of a man by cross-examination, they work it into him. Honesty is rash and withal somewhat presumptuous; at first they question quietly enough, and the prisoner, proud of his innocence, as they call it, comes out with much that a sensible man would keep back; then, from these answers the inquisitor proceeds to put new questions, and is on the watch for the slightest contradiction; there he fastens his line; and, let the poor devil lose his self-possession, say too much here, or too little there, or, Heaven knows from what whim or other, let him withhold some trifling circumstance, or at any moment give way to fear—then we're on the right track, and, I assure you, no beggar-woman seeks for rags among the rubbish with more care than such a fabricator of rogues, from trifling, crooked, disjointed, misplaced, misprinted, and concealed facts and information, acknowledged or denied, endeavours at length to patch up a scarecrow, by means of which he may at least hang his victim in effigy; and the poor devil may thank Heaven if he is in a condition to see himself hanged.

JETTER. He has a ready tongue of his own.

CARPENTER. This may serve well enough with flies. Wasps laugh at your cunning web.

VANSEN. According to the kind of spider. The tall duke, now, has just the look of your garden spider; not the large-bellied kind, they are less dangerous; but your long-footed, meagre-bodied gentleman, that does not fatten on his diet, and whose threads are slender indeed, but not the less tenacious.

JETTER. Egmont is knight of the Golden Fleece, who dare lay hands on him? He can be tried only by his peers, by the assembled knights of his order. Your own foul tongue and evil conscience betray you into this nonsense.

VANSEN. Think you that I wish him ill? I would you were in the right. He is an excellent gentleman. He once let off, with a sound drubbing, some good friends of mine, who would else have been hanged. Now take yourselves off! begone, I advise you! yonder I see the patrol again commencing their round. They do not look as if they would be willing to fraternize with us over a

glass. We must wait, and bide our time. I have a couple of n eces and a gossip of a tapster; if after enjoying themselves in their company, they are not tamed, they are regular wolves.

SCENE II. *The Palace of Eulenberg, Residence of the DUKE OF ALVA.*

SILVA and GOMEZ (*meeting*).

SILVA. Have you executed the duke's commands?

GOMEZ. Punctually. All the day-patrols have received orders to assemble at the appointed time, at the various points that I have indicated. Meanwhile, they march as usual through the town to maintain order. Each is ignorant respecting the movements of the rest, and imagines the command to have reference to himself alone; thus in a moment the cordon can be formed, and all the avenues to the palace occupied. Know you the reason of this command?

SILVA. I am accustomed blindly to obey; and to whom can one more easily render obedience than to the duke, since the event always proves the wisdom of his commands?

GOMEZ. Well! Well! I am not surprised that you are become as reserved and monosyllabic as the duke, since you are obliged to be always about his person; to me, however, who am accustomed to the lighter service of Italy, it seems strange enough. In loyalty and obedience, I am the same old soldier as ever; but I am wont to indulge in gossip and discussion; here, you are all silent, and seem as though you knew not how to enjoy yourselves. The duke, methinks, is like a brazen tower without gates, the garrison of which must be furnished with wings. Not long ago I heard him say at the table of a gay, jovial fellow that he was like a bad spirit-shop, with a brandy sign displayed, to allure idlers, vagabonds, and thieves.

SILVA. And has he not brought us hither in silence?

GOMEZ. Nothing can be said against that. Of a truth, we, who witnessed the address with which he led the

troops hither out of Italy, have seen something. How he advanced warily through friends and foes; through the French, both royalists and heretics; through the Swiss and their confederates; maintained the strictest discipline, and accomplished with ease, and without the slightest hindrance, a march that was esteemed so perilous!—We have seen and learned something.

SILVA. Here too! Is not everything as still and quiet as though there had been no disturbance?

GOMEZ. Why, as for that, it was tolerably quiet when we arrived.

SILVA. The provinces have become much more tranquil; if there is any movement now, it is only among those who wish to escape; and to them, methinks, the duke will speedily close every outlet.

GOMEZ. This service cannot fail to win for him the favour of the king.

SILVA. And nothing is more expedient for us than to retain his. Should the king come hither, the duke doubtless and all whom he recommends will not go without their reward.

GOMEZ. Do you really believe then that the king will come?

SILVA. So many preparations are being made, that the report appears highly probable.

GOMEZ. I am not convinced, however.

SILVA. Keep your thoughts to yourself then. For if it should not be the king's intention to come, it is at least certain that he wishes the rumour to be believed.

Enter FERDINAND.

FERDINAND. Is my father not yet abroad?

SILVA. We are waiting to receive his commands.

FERDINAND. The princes will soon be here.

GOMEZ. Are they expected to-day?

FERDINAND. Orange and Egmont.

GOMEZ (*aside to SILVA*). A light breaks in upon me.

SILVA. Well, then, say nothing about it.

Enter the DUKE OF ALVA (as he advances the rest draw back).

ALVA. Gomez.

GOMEZ (*steps forward*). My lord.

ALVA. You have distributed the guards and given them their instructions?

GOMEZ. Most accurately. The day-patrols——

ALVA. Enough. Attend in the gallery. Silva will announce to you the moment when you are to draw them together, and to occupy the avenues leading to the palace. The rest you know.

GOMEZ. I do, my lord.

[*Exit.*]

SILVA. Silva.

SILVA. Here, my lord.

ALVA. I shall require you to manifest to-day all the qualities which I have hitherto prized in you: courage, resolve, unswerving execution.

SILVA. I thank you for affording me an opportunity of showing that your old servant is unchanged.

ALVA. The moment the princes enter my cabinet, hasten to arrest Egmont's private secretary. You have made all needful preparations for securing the others who are specified?

SILVA. Rely upon us. Their doom, like a well-calculated eclipse, will overtake them with terrible certainty.

ALVA. Have you had them all narrowly watched?

SILVA. All. Egmont especially. He is the only one whose demeanour, since your arrival, remains unchanged. The live-long day he is now on one horse and now on another; he invites guests as usual, is merry and entertaining at table, plays at dice, shoots, and at night steals to his mistress. The others, on the contrary, have made a manifest pause in their mode of life; they remain at home, and, from the outward aspect of their houses, you would imagine that there was a sick man within,

ALVA. To work then, ere they recover in spite of us.

SILVA. I shall bring them without fail. In obedience to your commands we load them with officious honours; they are alarmed; cautiously, yet anxiously, they tender us their thanks, feel that flight would be the most prudent course, yet none venture to adopt it; they hesitate, are unable to work together, while the bond which unites them prevents their acting boldly as individuals. They

are anxious to withdraw themselves from suspicion, and thus only render themselves more obnoxious to it. I already contemplate with joy the successful realization of your scheme.

ALVA. I rejoice only over what is accomplished, and not lightly over that; for there ever remains ground for serious and anxious thought. Fortune is capricious; the common, the worthless, she oft-times ennobles, while she dishonours with a contemptible issue the most maturely-considered schemes. Await the arrival of the princes, then order Gomez to occupy the streets, and hasten yourself to arrest Egmont's secretary, and the others who are specified. This done, return, and announce to my son that he may bring me the tidings in the council.

SILVA. I trust this evening I shall dare to appear in your presence. (*ALVA approaches his son who has hitherto been standing in the gallery.*) I dare not whisper it even to myself; but my mind misgives me. The event will, I fear, be different from what he anticipates. I see before me spirits, who, still and thoughtful, weigh in ebon scales the doom of princes and of many thousands. Slowly the beam moves up and down; deeply the judges appear to ponder; at length one scale sinks, the other rises, breathed on by the caprice of destiny, and all is decided. [*Exit.*]

ALVA (*advancing with his son*). How did you find the town?

FERDINAND. All is again quiet. I rode as for pastime, from street to street. Your well-distributed patrols hold Fear so tightly yoked, that she does not venture even to whisper. The town resembles a plain when the lightning's glare announces the impending storm: no bird, no beast is to be seen, that is not stealing to a place of shelter.

ALVA. Has nothing further occurred?

FERDINAND. Egmont, with a few companions, rode into the market-place; we exchanged greetings; he was mounted on an unbroken charger, which excited my admiration, "Let us hasten to break in our steeds," he exclaimed; "we shall need them ere long!" He said that he should see me again to-day; he is coming here, at your desire, to deliberate with you.

ALVA. He will see you again.

FERDINAND. Among all the knights whom I know here, he pleases me the best. I think we shall be friends.

ALVA. You are always rash and inconsiderate. I recognize in you the levity of your mother, which threw her unconditionally into my arms. Appearances have already allured you precipitately into many dangerous connections.

FERDINAND. You will find me ever submissive.

ALVA. I pardon this inconsiderate kindness, this heedless gaiety, in consideration of your youthful blood. Only forget not on what mission I am sent, and what part in it I would assign to you.

FERDINAND. Admonish me, and spare me not, when you deem it needful.

ALVA (*after a pause*). My son!

FERDINAND. My father!

ALVA. The princes will be here anon; Orange and Egmont. It is not mistrust that has withheld me till now from disclosing to you what is about to take place. They will not depart hence.

FERDINAND. What do you purpose?

ALVA. It has been resolved to arrest them.—You are astonished! Learn what you have to do; the reasons you shall know when all is accomplished. Time fails now to unfold them. With you alone I wish to deliberate on the weightiest, the most secret matters; a powerful bond holds us linked together; you are dear and precious to me; on you I would bestow everything. Not the habit of obedience alone would I impress upon you; I desire also to implant within your mind the power to realize, to command, to execute; to you I would bequeath a vast inheritance, to the king a most useful servant; I would endow you with the noblest of my possessions, that you may not be ashamed to appear among your brethren.

FERDINAND. How deeply am I indebted to you for this love, which you manifest for me alone, while a whole kingdom trembles before you!

ALVA. Now hear what is to be done. As soon as the princes have entered, every avenue to the palace will be guarded. This duty is confided to Gomez, Silva will

hasten to arrest Egmont's secretary, together with those whom we hold most in suspicion. You, meanwhile, will take the command of the guards stationed at the gates and in the courts. Before all, take care to occupy the adjoining apartment with the trustiest soldiers. Wait in the gallery till Silva returns, then bring me any unimportant paper, as a signal that his commission is executed. Remain in the ante-chamber till Orange retires, follow him; I will detain Egmont here as though I had some further communication to make to him. At the end of the gallery demand Orange's sword, summon the guards, secure promptly the most dangerous man; I meanwhile will seize Egmont here.

FERDINAND. I obey, my father—for the first time with a heavy and an anxious heart.

ALVA. I pardon you; this is the first great day of your life.

Enter SILVA.

SILVA. A courier from Antwerp. Here is Orange's letter. He does not come.

ALVA. Says the messenger so?

SILVA. No, my own heart tells me.

ALVA. In thee speaks my evil genius. (*After reading the letter, he makes a sign to the two, and they retire to the gallery. ALVA remains alone in front of the stage.*) He comes not! Till the last moment he delays declaring himself. He ventures not to come! So then, the cautious man, contrary to all expectation, is for once cautious enough to lay aside his wonted caution. The hour moves on! Let the finger travel but a short space over the dial, and a great work is done or lost—irrevocably lost; for the opportunity can never be retrieved, nor can our intention remain concealed. Long had I maturely weighed everything, foreseen even this contingency, and firmly resolved in my own mind what, in that case, was to be done; and now, when I am called upon to act, I can with difficulty guard my mind from being again distracted by conflicting doubts. Is it expedient to seize the others if he escape me? Shall I delay, and suffer Egmont to elude my grasp, together with his friends, and so many others who now,

and perhaps for to-day only, are in my hands? How! Does destiny control even thee—the uncontrollable? How long matured! How well prepared! How great, how admirable the plan! How nearly had hope attained the goal? And now, at the decisive moment, thou art placed between two evils; as in a lottery, thou dost grasp in the dark future; what thou hast drawn remains still unrolled, to thee unknown whether it is a prize or a blank! (*He becomes attentive, like one who hears a noise, and steps to the window.*) 'Tis he! Egmont! Did thy steed bear thee hither so lightly, and started not at the scent of blood, at the spirit with the naked sword who received thee at the gate? Dismount! Lo, now thou hast one foot in the grave! And now both! Ay, caress him, and for the last time stroke his neck for the gallant service he has rendered thee. And for me no choice is left. The delusion, in which Egmont ventures here to-day, cannot a second time deliver him into my hands! Hark! (*FERDINAND and SILVA enter hastily.*) Obey my orders! I swerve not from my purpose. I shall detain Egmont here as best I may, till you bring me tidings from Silva. Then remain at hand. Thee, too, fate has robbed of the proud honour of arresting with thine own hand the king's greatest enemy. (*to SILVA.*) Be prompt! (*to FERDINAND.*) Advance to meet him.

(*ALVA remains some moments alone, pacing the chamber in silence.*)

Enter EGMONT.

EGMONT. I come to learn the king's commands; to hear what service he demands from our loyalty, which remains sternly devoted to him.

ALVA. He desires, before all, to hear your counsel.

EGMONT. Upon what subject? Does Orange come also? I thought to find him here.

ALVA. I regret that he fails us at this important crisis. The king desires your counsel, your opinion as to the best means of tranquillizing these states. He trusts indeed that you will zealously co-operate with him in quelling these disturbances, and in securing to these provinces the benefit of complete and permanent order.

EGMONT. You, my lord, should know better than I, that tranquillity is already sufficiently restored, and was still more so, till the appearance of fresh troops again agitated the public mind, and filled it anew with anxiety and alarm.

ALVA. You seem to intimate that it would have been more advisable if the king had not placed me in a position to interrogate you.

EGMONT. Pardon me! It is not for me to determine whether the king acted advisedly in sending the army hither, whether the might of his royal presence alone would not have operated more powerfully. The army is here, the king is not. But we should be most ungrateful were we to forget what we owe to the Regent. Let it be acknowledged! By her prudence and valour, by her judicious use of authority and force, of persuasion and finesse, she pacified the insurgents, and, to the astonishment of the world, succeeded, in the course of a few months, in bringing a rebellious people back to their duty.

ALVA. I deny it not. The insurrection is quelled; and the people appear to be already forced back within the bounds of obedience. But does it not depend upon their caprice alone to overstep these bounds? Who shall prevent them from again breaking loose? Where is the power capable of restraining them? Who will be answerable to us for their future loyalty and submission? Their own good-will is the sole pledge we have.

EGMONT. And is not the good-will of a people the surest, the noblest pledge? By heaven! when can a monarch hold himself more secure, ay, both against foreign and domestic foes, than when all can stand for one, and one for all?

ALVA. You would not have us believe, however, that such is the case here at present?

EGMONT. Let the king proclaim a general pardon; he will thus tranquillize the public mind; and it will be seen how speedily loyalty and affection will return, when confidence is restored.

ALVA. How! And suffer those who have insulted the majesty of the king, who have violated the sanctuaries of our religion, to go abroad unchallenged! living witnesses that enormous crimes may be perpetrated with impunity!

EGMONT. And ought not a crime of frenzy, of intoxication, to be excused, rather than horribly chastised? Especially when there is the sure hope, nay, more, where there is positive certainty that the evil will never again recur? Would not sovereigns thus be more secure? Are not those monarchs most extolled by the world and by posterity, who can pardon, pity, despise an offence against their dignity? Are they not on that account likened to God himself, who is far too exalted to be assailed by every idle blasphemy?

ALVA. And therefore, should the king contend for the honour of God and of religion, we for the authority of the king. What the supreme power disdains to avert, it is our duty to avenge. Were I to counsel, no guilty person should live to rejoice in his impunity.

EGMONT. Think you that you will be able to reach them all? Do we not daily hear that fear is driving them to and fro, and forcing them out of the land? The more wealthy will escape to other countries with their property, their children, and their friends; while the poor will carry their industrious hands to our neighbours.

ALVA. They will, if they cannot be prevented. It is on this account that the king desires counsel and aid from every prince, zealous co-operation from every stadtholder; not merely a description of the present posture of affairs, or conjectures as to what might take place were events suffered to hold on their course without interruption. To contemplate a mighty evil, to flatter oneself with hope, to trust to time, to strike a blow, like the clown in a play, so as to make a noise and appear to do something, when in fact one would fain do nothing; is not such conduct calculated to awaken a suspicion that those who act thus contemplate with satisfaction a rebellion, which they would not indeed excite, but which they are by no means unwilling to encourage?

EGMONT (*about to break forth, restrains himself, and after a brief pause, speaks with composure*). Not every design is obvious, and many a man's design is misconstrued. It is widely rumoured, however, that the object which the king has in view is not so much to govern the provinces according to uniform and clearly defined laws, to maintain

the majesty of religion, and to give his people universal peace, as unconditionally to subjugate them, to rob them of their ancient rights, to appropriate their possessions, to curtail the fair privileges of the nobles, for whose sake alone they are ready to serve him with life and limb. Religion, it is said, is merely a splendid device, behind which every dangerous design may be contrived with the greater ease; the prostrate crowds adore the sacred symbols pictured there, while behind lurks the fowler ready to ensnare them.

ALVA. This must I hear from you?

EGMONT. I speak not my own sentiments! I but repeat what is loudly rumoured, and uttered now here and now there by great and by humble, by wise men and fools. The Netherlanders fear a double yoke, and who will be surety to them for their liberty?

ALVA. Liberty! A fair word when rightly understood. What liberty would they have? What is the freedom of the most free? To do right! And in that the monarch will not hinder them. No! No! They imagine themselves enslaved, when they have not the power to injure themselves and others. Would it not be better to abdicate at once, rather than rule such a people? When the country is threatened by foreign invaders, the burghers, occupied only with their immediate interests, bestow no thought upon the advancing foe, and when the king requires their aid, they quarrel among themselves, and thus, as it were, conspire with the enemy. Far better is it to circumscribe their power, to control and guide them for their good, as children are controlled and guided. Trust me, a people grows neither old nor wise, a people remains always in its infancy.

EGMONT. How rarely does a king attain wisdom! And is it not fit that the many should confide their interests to the many rather than to the one? And not even to the one, but to the few servants of the one, men who have grown old under the eyes of their master. To grow wise, it seems, is the exclusive privilege of these favoured individuals.

ALVA. Perhaps for the very reason that they are not left to themselves.

EGMONT. And therefore they would fain leave no one else to his own guidance. Let them do what they like, however; I have replied to your questions, and I repeat, the measures you propose will never succeed! They cannot succeed! I know my countrymen. They are men worthy to tread God's earth; each complete in himself, a little king, steadfast, active, capable, loyal, attached to ancient customs. It may be difficult to win their confidence, but it is easy to retain it. Firm and unbending! They may be crushed, but not subdued.

ALVA (*who during this speech has looked round several times*). Would you venture to repeat what you have uttered, in the king's presence?

EGMONT. It were the worse, if in his presence I were restrained by fear! The better for him and for his people, if he inspired me with confidence, if he encouraged me to give yet freer utterance to my thoughts.

ALVA. What is profitable, I can listen to as well as he.

EGMONT. I would say to him—'Tis easy for the shepherd to drive before him a flock of sheep; the ox draws the plough without opposition; but if you would ride the noble steed, you must study his thoughts, you must require nothing unreasonable, nor unreasonably, from him. The burgher desires to retain his ancient constitution; to be governed by his own countrymen; and why? Because he knows in that case how he shall be ruled, because he can rely upon their disinterestedness, upon their sympathy with his fate.

ALVA. And ought not the Regent to be empowered to alter these ancient usages? Should not this constitute his fairest privilege? What is permanent in this world? And shall the constitution of a state alone remain unchanged? Must not every relation alter in the course of time, and on that very account, an ancient constitution become the source of a thousand evils, because not adapted to the present condition of the people? These ancient rights afford, doubtless, convenient loopholes, through which the crafty and the powerful may creep, and wherein they may lie concealed, to the injury of the people and of the entire community; and it is on this account, I fear, that they are held in such high esteem.

EGMONT. And these arbitrary changes, these unlimited encroachments of the supreme power, are they not indications that one will permit himself to do what is forbidden to thousands? The monarch would alone be free, that he may have it in his power to gratify his every wish, to realize his every thought. And though we should confide in him as a good and virtuous sovereign, will he be answerable to us for his successors? That none who come after him shall rule without consideration, without forbearance! And who would deliver us from absolute caprice, should he send hither his servants, his minions, who, without knowledge of the country and its requirements, should govern according to their own good pleasure, meet with no opposition, and know themselves exempt from all responsibility?

ALVA (*who has meanwhile again looked round*). There is nothing more natural than that a king should choose to retain the power in his own hands, and that he should select as the instruments of his authority, those who best understand him, who desire to understand him, and who will unconditionally execute his will.

EGMONT. And just as natural is it, that the burgher should prefer being governed by one born and reared in the same land, whose notions of right and wrong are in harmony with his own, and whom he can regard as his brother.

ALVA. And yet the noble, methinks, has shared rather unequally with these brethren of his.

EGMONT. That took place centuries ago, and is now submitted to without envy. But should new men, whose presence is not needed in the country, be sent, to enrich themselves a second time, at the cost of the nation; should the people see themselves exposed to their bold, unscrupulous rapacity, it would excite a ferment that would not soon be quelled.

ALVA. You utter words to which I ought not to listen; —I, too, am a foreigner.

EGMONT. That they are spoken in your presence is a sufficient proof that they have no reference to you.

ALVA. Be that as it may, I would rather not hear them from you. The king sent me here in the hope that I

should obtain the support of the nobles. The king wills, and will have his will obeyed. After profound deliberation, the king at length discerns what course will best promote the welfare of the people; matters cannot be permitted to go on as heretofore; it is the king's intention to limit their power for their own good; if necessary, to force upon them their salvation: to sacrifice the more dangerous burghers in order that the rest may find repose, and enjoy in peace the blessing of a wise government. This is his resolve; this I am commissioned to announce to the nobles; and in his name I require from them advice, not as to the course to be pursued—on that he is resolved—but as to the best means of carrying his purpose into effect.

EGMONT. Your words, alas, justify the fears of the people, the universal fear! The king has then resolved as no sovereign ought to resolve. In order to govern his subjects more easily, he would crush, subvert, nay, ruthlessly destroy, their strength, their spirit, and their self-respect! He would violate the inmost core of their individuality, doubtless with the view of promoting their happiness. He would annihilate them, that they may assume a new, a different form. Oh! if his purpose be good, he is fatally misguided! It is not the king whom we resist;—we but place ourselves in the way of the monarch, who, unhappily, is about to take the first rash step in a wrong direction.

ALVA. Such being your sentiments, it were a vain attempt for us to endeavour to agree. You must indeed think poorly of the king, and contemptibly of his counsellors, if you imagine that everything has not already been thought of and maturely weighed. I have no commission a second time to balance conflicting arguments. From the people I demand submission;—and from you, their leaders and princes, I demand counsel and support, as pledges of this unconditional duty.

EGMONT. Demand our heads, and your object is attained; to a noble soul it must be indifferent whether he stoop his neck to such a yoke, or lay it upon the block. I have spoken much to little purpose. I have agitated the air, but accomplished nothing.

Enter FERDINAND.

FERDINAND. Pardon my intrusion. Here is a letter, the bearer of which urgently demands an answer.

ALVA. Allow me to peruse its contents. *(Steps aside.)*

FERDINAND *(to EGMONT)*. 'Tis a noble steed that your people have brought, to carry you away.

EGMONT. I have seen worse. I have had him some time; I think of parting with him. If he pleases you we shall probably soon agree as to the price.

FERDINAND. We will think about it.

(ALVA motions to his son, who retires to the back-ground.)

EGMONT. Farewell! Allow me to retire; for, by heaven, I know not what more I can say.

ALVA. Fortunately for you, chance prevents you from making a fuller disclosure of your sentiments. You incautiously lay bare the recesses of your heart, and your own lips furnish evidence against you, more fatal than could be produced by your bitterest adversary.

EGMONT. This reproach disturbs me not. I know my own heart; I know with what honest zeal I am devoted to the king; I know that my allegiance is more true than that of many who, in his service, seek only to serve themselves. I regret that our discussion should terminate so unsatisfactorily, and trust that in spite of our opposing views, the service of the king, our master, and the welfare of our country, may speedily unite us; another conference, the presence of the princes who to-day are absent, may, perchance, in a more propitious moment, accomplish what at present appears impossible. In this hope I take my leave.

ALVA *(who at the same time makes a sign to FERDINAND)*. Hold, Egmont!—Your sword!—*(The centre door opens and discloses the gallery, which is occupied with guards, who remain motionless.)*

EGMONT *(after a pause of astonishment)*. This was the intention? For this thou hast summoned me? *(Grasping his sword as if to defend himself.)* Am I then weaponless?

ALVA. The king commands. Thou art my prisoner. *(At the same time guards enter from both sides.)*

EGMONT *(after a pause)*. The king?—Orange! Orange! *(after a pause, resigning his sword.)* Take it! It has been

employed far oftener in defending the cause of my king than in protecting this breast.

(He retires by the centre door, followed by the guard and ALVA'S son. ALVA remains standing while the curtain falls.)

ACT V.

SCENE I. *A Street. Twilight.*

CLARA, BRACKENBURG, BURGHERS.

BRACKENBURG. Dearest, for Heaven's sake, what wouldst thou do?

CLARA. Come with me, Brackenburg! Thou canst not know the people, we are certain to rescue him; for what can equal their love for him? Each feels, I could swear it, the burning desire to deliver him, to avert danger from a life so precious, and to restore freedom to the most free. Come! A voice only is wanting to call them together. In their souls the memory is still fresh of all they owe him, and well they know that his mighty arm alone shields them from destruction. For his sake, for their own sake, they must peril everything. And what do we peril? At most, our lives, which, if he perish, are not worth preserving.

BLACKENBURG. Unhappy girl! Thou seest not the power that holds us fettered as with bands of iron.

CLARA. To me it does not appear invincible. Let us not lose time in idle words. Here come some of our old, honest, valiant burghers! Hark ye, friends! Neighbours! Hark!—Say, how fares it with Egmont?

CARPENTER. What does the girl want? Tell her to hold her peace.

CLARA. Step nearer, that we may speak low, till we are united and more strong. Not a moment is to be lost! Audacious tyranny, that dared to fetter him, already lifts the dagger against his life. Oh, my friends! With the advancing twilight my anxiety grows more intense. I dread this night. Come! Let us disperse; let us hasten from quarter to quarter, and call out the burghers. Let

every one grasp his ancient weapons. In the market-place we meet again, and every one will be carried onward by our gathering stream. The enemy will see themselves surrounded, overwhelmed, and be compelled to yield. How can a handful of slaves resist us? And he will return among us, he will see himself rescued, and can for once thank us, us, who are already so deeply in his debt. He will behold, perchance, ay doubtless, he will again behold the morn's red dawn in the free heavens.

CARPENTER. What ails thee, maiden?

CLARA. Can ye misunderstand me? I speak of the Count! I speak of Egmont.

JETTER. Speak not the name! 'tis deadly.

CLARA. Not speak his name? How? Not Egmont's name? Is it not on every tongue? Where stands it not inscribed? Often have I read it emblazoned with all its letters among these stars. Not utter it? What mean ye? Friends! good, kind neighbours, ye are dreaming; collect yourselves. Gaze not upon me with those fixed and anxious looks! Cast not such timid glances on every side! I but give utterance to the wish of all. Is not my voice the voice of your own hearts? Who, in this fearful night, ere he seeks his restless couch, but on bended knee will, in earnest prayer, seek to wrest his life as a cherished boon from heaven? Ask each other! Let each ask his own heart! And who but exclaims with me,—“Egmont's liberty, or death!”

JETTER. God help us! This is a sad business.

CLARA. Stay! Stay! Shrink not away at the sound of his name, to meet whom ye were wont to press forward so joyously!—When rumour announced his approach, when the cry arose, “Egmont comes! He comes from Ghent!”—then happy indeed were those citizens who dwelt in the streets through which he was to pass. And when the neighing of his steed was heard, did not every one throw aside his work, while a ray of hope and joy, like a sunbeam from his countenance, stole over the toil-worn faces that peered from every window. Then, as ye stood in the doorways, ye would lift up your children in your arms, and pointing to him, exclaim: “See, that is Egmont, he who towers above the rest! 'Tis from him

that ye must look for better times than those your poor fathers have known." Let not your children inquire at some future day, "Where is he? Where are the better times ye promised us?"—Thus we waste the time in idle words! do nothing,—betray him.

SOEST. Shame on thee, Brackenburg! Let her not run on thus! Prevent the mischief!

BRACKENBURG. Dear Clara! Let us go! What will your mother say? Perchance——

CLARA. Thinkest thou I am a child, or frantic? What avails perchance?—With no vain hope canst thou hide from me this dreadful certainty Ye shall hear me and ye will: for I see it, ye are overwhelmed, ye cannot hearken to the voice of your own hearts. Through the present peril cast but one glance into the past,—the recent past. Send your thoughts forward into the future. Could ye live, would ye live, were he to perish? With him expires the last breath of freedom. What was he not to you? For whose sake did he expose himself to the direst perils? His blood flowed, his wounds were healed for you alone. The mighty spirit, that upheld you all, a dungeon now confines, while the horrors of secret murder are hovering around. Perhaps he thinks of you—perhaps he hopes in you,—he who has been accustomed only to grant favours to others and to fulfil their prayers.

CARPENTER. Come, gossip.

CLARA. I have neither the arms, nor the vigour of a man; but I have that which ye all lack—courage and contempt of danger. O that my breath could kindle your souls! That, pressing you to this bosom, I could arouse and animate you! Come! I will march in your midst!—As a waving banner, though weaponless, leads on a gallant army of warriors, so shall my spirit hover, like a flame, over your ranks, while love and courage shall unite the dispersed and wavering multitude into a terrible host.

JETTER. Take her away; I pity her, poor thing!

[*Exeunt* BURGHERS.

BRACKENBURG. Clara! Seest thou not where we are?

CLARA. Where? Under the dome of heaven, which has so often seemed to arch itself more gloriously as the

noble Egmont passed beneath it. From these windows I have seen them look forth, four or five heads one above the other; at these doors the cowards have stood, bowing and scraping, if he but chanced to look down upon them! Oh, how dear they were to me, when they honoured him. Had he been a tyrant they might have turned with indifference from his fall! But they loved him! O ye hands, so prompt to wave caps in his honour, can ye not grasp a sword? Brackenburg, and we?—do we chide them? These arms that have so often embraced him, what do they for him now? Stratagem has accomplished so much in the world. Thou knowest the ancient castle, every passage, every secret way.—Nothing is impossible,—suggest some plan——

BRACKENBURG. That we might go home!

CLARA. Well.

BRACKENBURG. There at the corner I see Alva's guard; let the voice of reason penetrate to thy heart! Dost thou deem me a coward? Dost thou doubt that for thy sake I would peril my life? Here we are both mad, I as well thou. Dost thou not perceive that thy scheme is impracticable? Oh, be calm! Thou art beside thyself.

CLARA. Beside myself! Horrible. You, Brackenburg, are beside yourself. When you hailed the hero with loud acclaim, called him your friend, your hope, your refuge, shouted vivats as he passed;—then I stood in my corner, half opened the window, concealed myself while I listened, and my heart beat higher than yours who greeted him so loudly. Now it again beats higher! In the hour of peril you conceal yourselves, deny him, and feel not, that if he perish, you are lost.

BRACKENBURG. Come home.

CLARA. Home?

BRACKENBURG. Recollect thyself! Look around thee! These are the streets in which thou wert wont to appear only on the Sabbath-day, when thou didst walk modestly to church; where, over-decorous perhaps, thou wert displeased if I but joined thee with a kindly greeting. And now thou dost stand, speak, and act before the eyes of the whole world. Recollect thyself, love! How can this avail us?

CLARA. Home! Yes, I remember. Come, Brackenburg, let us go home! Knowest thou where my home lies?

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II. *A Prison.*

Lighted by a lamp, a couch in the back-ground.

EGMONT (*alone*). Old friend! Ever faithful sleep, dost thou too forsake me, like my other friends? How wert thou wont of yore to descend unsought upon my free brow, cooling my temples as with a myrtle wreath of love! Amidst the din of battle, on the waves of life, I rested in thine arms, breathing lightly as a growing boy. When tempests whistled through the leaves and boughs, when the summits of the lofty trees swung creaking in the blast, the inmost core of my heart remained unmoved. What agitates thee now? What shakes thy firm and steadfast mind? I feel it, 'tis the sound of the murderous axe, gnawing at thy root. Yet I stand erect, but an inward shudder runs through my frame. Yes, it prevails, this treacherous power; it undermines the firm, the lofty stem, and ere the bark withers, thy verdant crown falls crashing to the earth.

Yet wherefore now, thou who hast so often chased the weightiest cares like bubbles from thy brow, wherefore canst thou not dissipate this dire foreboding which incessantly haunts thee in a thousand different shapes? Since when hast thou trembled at the approach of death, amid whose varying forms, thou wert wont calmly to dwell, as with the other shapes of this familiar earth. But 'tis not he, the sudden foe, to encounter whom the sound bosom emulously pants;—'tis the dungeon, emblem of the grave, revolting alike to the hero and the coward. How intolerable I used to feel it, in the stately hall, girt round by gloomy walls, when, seated on my cushioned chair, in the solemn assembly of the princes, questions, which scarcely required deliberation, were overlaid with endless discussions, while the rafters of the ceiling seemed to stifle and oppress me. Then I would hurry forth as soon as possible, fling myself upon my horse with deep-drawn breath, and away to the wide champaign, man's natural element, where, exhaling from the earth, nature's richest

treasures are poured forth around us, while, from the wide heavens, the stars shed down their blessings through the still air; where, like earth-born giants, we spring aloft, invigorated by our mother's touch; where our entire humanity and our human desires throb in every vein; where the desire to press forward, to vanquish, to snatch, to use his clenched fist, to possess, to conquer, glows through the soul of the young hunter; where the warrior, with rapid stride, assumes his inborn right to dominion over the world; and, with terrible liberty, sweeps like a desolating hailstorm over field and grove, knowing no boundaries traced by the hand of man.

Thou art but a shadow, a dream of the happiness I so long possessed; where has treacherous fate conducted thee? Did she deny thee to meet the rapid stroke of never-shunned death, in the open face of day, only to prepare for thee a foretaste of the grave, in the midst of this loathsome corruption? How revoltingly its rank odour exhales from these damp stones! Life stagnates, and my foot shrinks from the couch as from the grave.

Oh care, care! Thou who dost begin prematurely the work of murder,—forbear;—Since when has Egmont been alone, so utterly alone in the world? 'Tis doubt renders thee insensible, not happiness. The justice of the king, in which, through life thou hast confided, the friendship of the Regent, which, thou mayst confess it, was akin to love,—have these suddenly vanished, like a meteor of the night, and left thee alone upon thy gloomy path? Will not Orange, at the head of thy friends, contrive some daring scheme? Will not the people assemble, and with gathering might, attempt the rescue of their faithful friend?

Ye walls, which thus gird me round, separate me not from the well intentioned zeal of so many kindly souls. And may the courage with which my glance was wont to inspire them, now return again from their hearts to mine. Yes! they assemble in thousands! they come! they stand beside me! their pious wish rises urgently to heaven, and implores a miracle; and if no angel stoops for my deliverance, I see them grasp eagerly their lance and sword. The gates are forced, the bolts are riven, the walls fall beneath their conquering hands, and Egmont advances

joyously, to hail the freedom of the rising morn. How many well known faces receive me with loud acclaim! O Clara! wert thou a man, I should see thee here the very first, and thank thee for that which it is galling to owe even to a king—liberty.

SCENE III. *Clara's House.*

CLARA (*enters from her chamber with a lamp and a glass of water; she places the glass upon the table and steps to the window*). Brackenburg, is it you? What noise was that? No one yet? No one! I will set the lamp in the window, that he may see that I am still awake, that I still watch for him. He promised me tidings. Tidings? horrible certainty!—Egmont condemned!—what tribunal has the right to summon him?—And they dare to condemn him!—Does the king condemn him, or the duke? And the Regent withdraws herself! Orange hesitates, and all his friends!—Is this the world, of whose fickleness and treachery I have heard so much, and as yet experienced nothing? Is this the world?—Who could be so base as to bear malice against one so dear? Could villainy itself be audacious enough to overwhelm with sudden destruction the object of a nation's homage? Yet so it is—it is—O Egmont, I held thee safe before God and man, safe as in my arms! What was I to thee? Thou hast called me thine, my whole being was devoted to thee. What am I now? In vain I stretch out my hand to the toils that environ thee. Thou helpless and I free!—Here is the key that unlocks my chamber door. My going out and my coming in, depend upon my own caprice; yet, alas, to aid thee I am powerless!—Oh, bind me that I may not despair; hurl me into the deepest dungeon, that I may dash my head against the damp walls, groan for freedom, and dream how I would rescue him if fetters did not hold me bound.—Now I am free, and in freedom lies the anguish of impotence.—Conscious of my own existence, yet unable to stir a limb in his behalf, alas! even this insignificant portion of thy being, thy Clara, is, like thee, a captive, and, separated from thee, consumes her expiring energies in the agonies of death.—I hear a stealthy step,—a cough—Brackenburg,—'tis he!—Kind, unhappy man, thy des-

tiny remains ever the same; thy love opens to thee the door at night, alas! to what a doleful meeting. (*Enter BRACKENBURG.*) Thou com'st so pale, so terrified! Brackenburg! What is it?

BRACKENBURG. I have sought thee through perils and circuitous paths. The principal streets are occupied with troops;—through lanes and by-ways have I stolen to thee!

CLARA. Tell me, how is it?

BRACKENBURG (*seating himself*). O Clara, let me weep. I loved him not. He was the rich man who lured to better pasture the poor man's solitary lamb. I have never cursed him, God has created me with a true and tender heart. My life was consumed in anguish, and each day I hoped would end my misery.

CLARA. Let that be forgotten, Brackenburg! Forget thyself. Speak to me of him! Is it true? Is he condemned?

BRACKENBURG. He is! I know it.

CLARA. And still lives?

BRACKENBURG. Yes, he still lives.

CLARA. How canst thou be sure of that? Tyranny murders the hero in the night! His blood flows concealed from every eye. The people stunned and bewildered, lie buried in sleep, dream of deliverance, dream of the fulfilment of their impotent wishes, while, indignant at our supineness, his spirit abandons the world. He is no more! Deceive me not; deceive not thyself!

BRACKENBURG. No,—he lives! and the Spaniards, alas, are preparing for the people, on whom they are about to trample, a terrible spectacle, in order to crush for ever, by a violent blow, each heart that yet pants for freedom.

CLARA. Proceed! Calmly pronounce my death-warrant also! Near and more near I approach that blessed land, and already from those realms of peace, I feel the breath of consolation. Say on.

BRACKENBURG. From casual words, dropped here and there by the guards, I learned that secretly in the market-place they were preparing some terrible spectacle. Through by-ways and familiar lanes I stole to my cousin's house, and from a back window, looked out upon the market-place. Torches waved to and fro, in the hands of a wide

circle of Spanish soldiers. I sharpened my unaccustomed sight, and out of the darkness there arose before me a scaffold, black, spacious, and lofty! The sight filled me with horror. Several persons were employed in covering with black cloth such portions of the wood-work as yet remained white and visible. The steps were covered last, also with black;—I saw it all. They seemed preparing for the celebration of some horrible sacrifice. A white crucifix, that shone like silver through the night, was raised on one side. As I gazed, the terrible conviction strengthened in my mind. Scattered torches still gleamed here and there; gradually they flickered and went out. Suddenly the hideous birth of night returned into its mother's womb.

CLARA. Hush, Brackenbush! Be still! Let this veil rest upon my soul. The spectres are vanished; and thou, gentle night, lend thy mantle to the inwardly fermenting earth, she will no longer endure the loathsome burden, shuddering, she rends open her yawning chasms, and with a crash swallows the murderous scaffold. And that God, whom in their rage they have insulted, sends down His angel from on high; at the hallowed touch of the messenger bolts and bars fly back; he pours around our friend a mild radiance, and leads him gently through the night to liberty. My path leads also through the darkness to meet him.

BRACKENBURG (*detaining her*). My child, whither wouldst thou go? What wouldst thou do?

CLARA. Softly, my friend, lest some one should awake! Lest we should awake ourselves! Know'st thou this phial, Brackenbush? I took it from thee once in jest, when thou, as was thy wont, didst threaten, in thy impatience, to end thy days.—And now my friend—

BRACKENBURG. In the name of all the saints!

CLARA. Thou canst not hinder me. Death is my portion! Grudge me not the quiet and easy death which thou hadst prepared for thyself. Give me thine hand!—At the moment when I uncloset that dismal portal through which there is no return, I may tell thee, with this pressure of the hand, how sincerely I have loved, how deeply I have pitied thee. My brother died young; I chose thee to fill his place; thy heart rebelled, thou didst

torment thyself and me, demanding with ever increasing fervour that which fate had not destined for thee. Forgive me and farewell! Let me call thee brother! 'Tis a name that embraces many names. Receive, with a true heart, the last fair token of the departing spirit—take this kiss. Death unites all, Brackenburg—us too it will unite!

BRACKENBURG. Let me then die with thee! Share it! oh, share it! There is enough to extinguish two lives.

CLARA. Hold! Thou must live, thou canst live.—Support my mother, who, without thee, would be a prey to want. Be to her what I can no longer be, live together, and weep for me. Weep for our fatherland, and for him who could alone have upheld it. The present generation must still endure this bitter woe; vengeance itself could not obliterate it. Poor souls, live on, through this gap in time, which is time no longer. To-day the world suddenly stands still, its course is arrested, and my pulse will beat but for a few minutes longer. Farewell.

BRACKENBURG. Oh, live with us, as we live only for thy sake! In taking thine own life, thou wilt take ours also; still live and suffer. We will stand by thee, nothing shall sever us from thy side, and love, with ever-watchful solicitude, shall prepare for thee the sweetest consolation in its loving arms. Be ours! Ours! I dare not say, mine.

CLARA. Hush, Brackenburg! Thou feelest not what chord thou touchest. Where hope appears to thee, I see only despair.

BRACKENBURG. Share hope with the living! Pause on the brink of the precipice, cast one glance into the gulf below, and then look back on us.

CLARA. I have conquered; call me not back to the struggle.

BRACKENBURG. Thou art stunned; enveloped in night, thou seekest the abyss. Every light is not yet extinguished, yet many days!—

CLARA. Alas! Alas! Cruelly thou dost rend the veil from before mine eyes. Yes, the day will dawn! Despite its misty shroud it needs must dawn. Timidly the burgher gazes from his window, night leaves behind an ebon speck; he looks, and the scaffold looms fearfully in the morning light. With re-awakened anguish the desecrated

image of the Saviour lifts to the Father its imploring eyes. The sun veils his beams, he will not mark the hero's death-hour. Slowly the fingers go their round—one hour strikes after another—hold! Now is the time. The thought of the morning scares me into the grave. (*She goes to the window as if to look out, and drinks secretly.*)

BRACKENBURG. Clara! Clara!

CLARA (*goes to the table, and drinks water*). Here is the remainder. I invite thee not to follow me. Do as thou wilt; farewell. Extinguish this lamp silently and without delay; I am going to rest. Steal quietly away, close the door after thee. Be still! Wake not my mother! Go, save thyself, if thou wouldst not be taken for my murderer. [*Exit.*]

BRACKENBURG. She leaves me for the last time as she has ever done. What human soul could conceive how cruelly she lacerates the heart that loves her. She leaves me to myself, leaves me to choose between life and death, and both are alike hateful to me. To die alone! Weep, ye tender souls! Fate has no sadder doom than mine. She shares with me the death-potion, yet sends me from her side! She draws me after her, yet thrusts me back into life! Oh, Egmont, how enviable a lot falls to thee! She goes before thee! The crown of victory from her hand is thine, she brings all heaven to meet thee!—And shall I follow? Again to stand aloof? To carry this inextinguishable jealousy even to yon distant realms? Earth is no longer a tarrying place for me, and hell and heaven offer equal torture. Now welcome to the wretched the dread hand of annihilation!

[*Exit.*]

(*The scene remains some time unchanged. Music sounds, indicating CLARA'S death; the lamp, which BRACKENBURG had forgotten to extinguish, flares up once or twice, and then suddenly expires. The scene changes to*

SCENE IV. A Prison.

EGMONT is discovered sleeping on a couch. A rustling of keys is heard; the door opens; servants enter with torches; FERDINAND and SILVA follow, accompanied by soldiers. EGMONT starts from his sleep.

EGMONT. Who are ye that thus rudely banish slumber from my eyes? What mean these vague and insolent

glances? Why this fearful procession? With what dream of horror come ye to delude my half-awakened soul?

SILVA. The duke sends us to announce your sentence.

EGMONT. Do ye also bring the headsman who is to execute it?

SILVA. Listen, and you will know the doom that awaits you.

EGMONT. It is in keeping with the rest of your infamous proceedings. Hatched in night and in night achieved, so would this audacious act of injustice shroud itself from observation!—Step boldly forth, thou who dost bear the sword concealed beneath thy mantle; here is my head, the freest ever severed by tyranny from the trunk.

SILVA. You err! The righteous judges who have condemned you will not conceal their sentence from the light of day.

EGMONT. Then does their audacity exceed all imagination and belief.

SILVA (*takes the sentence from an attendant, unfolds it, and reads.*) "In the King's name, and invested by his Majesty with authority to judge all his subjects of whatever rank, not excepting the knights of the Golden Fleece, we declare——"

EGMONT. Can the king transfer that authority?

SILVA. "We declare, after a strict and legal investigation, thee, Henry, Count Egmont, Prince of Gaure, guilty of high treason, and pronounce thy sentence:—That at early dawn thou be led from this prison to the market-place, and that there, in sight of the people, and as a warning to all traitors, thou with the sword be brought from life to death. Given at Brussels." (*Date and year so indistinctly read as to be imperfectly heard by the audience.*) "Ferdinand, Duke of Alva, President of the Tribunal of Twelve." Thou knowest now thy doom. Brief time remains for thee to prepare for the impending stroke, to arrange thy affairs, and to take leave of thy friends.

[*Exit SILVA with followers. FERDINAND remains with two torch-bearers. The stage is dimly lighted.*]

EGMONT (*stands for a time as if buried in thought, and allows SILVA to retire without looking round. He imagines himself alone, and, on raising his eyes, beholds ALVA's son.*) Thou

tarriest here? Wouldst thou by thy presence augment my amazement, my horror? Wouldst thou carry to thy father the welcome tidings that in unmanly fashion I despair. Go. Tell him that he deceives neither the world nor me. At first it will be whispered cautiously behind his back, then spoken more and more loudly, and when at some future day the ambitious man descends from his proud eminence, a thousand voices will proclaim—that 'twas not the welfare of the state, not the honour of the king, not the tranquillity of the provinces, that brought him hither. For his own selfish ends he, the warrior, has counselled war, that in war the value of his services might be enhanced. He has excited this monstrous insurrection that his presence might be deemed necessary in order to quell it. And I fall a victim to his mean hatred, his contemptible envy. Yes, I know it, dying and mortally wounded I may utter it; long has the proud man envied me, long has he meditated and planned my ruin.

Even then, when still young, we played at dice together, and the heaps of gold, one after the other, passed rapidly from his side to mine; he would look on with affected composure, while inwardly consumed with rage, more at my success than at his own loss. Well do I remember the fiery glance, the treacherous pallor that overspread his features when, at a public festival, we shot for a wager before assembled thousands. He challenged me, and both nations stood by; Spaniards and Netherlanders wagered on either side; I was the victor; his ball missed, mine hit the mark, and the air was rent by acclamations from my friends. His shot now hits me. Tell him that I know this, that I know him, that the world despises every trophy that a paltry spirit erects for itself by base and surreptitious arts. And thou! If it be possible for a son to swerve from the manners of his father, practise shame betimes, while thou art compelled to feel shame for him whom thou wouldst fain revere with thy whole heart.

FERDINAND. I listen without interrupting thee! Thy reproaches fall like blows upon a helmet. I feel the shock, but I am armed. They strike, they wound me not; I am sensible only to the anguish that lacerates my heart.

Alas! Alas! Have I lived to witness such a scene? Am I sent hither to behold a spectacle like this?

EGMONT. Dost thou break out into lamentations? What moves, what agitates thee thus? Is it a late remorse at having lent thyself to this infamous conspiracy? Thou art so young, thy exterior is so prepossessing. Thy demeanour towards me was so friendly, so unreserved! So long as I beheld thee, I was reconciled with thy father; and crafty, ay, more crafty than he, thou hast lured me into the toils. Thou art the wretch! The monster! Whoso confides in him, does so at his own peril; but who could apprehend danger in trusting thee? Go! Go! rob me not of the few moments that are left to me! Go, that I may collect my thoughts, the world forget, and find of all thyself!

FERDINAND. What can I say? I stand and gaze on thee, yet see thee not; I am scarcely conscious of my own existence. Shall I seek to excuse myself? Shall I assure thee that it was not till the last moment that I was made aware of my father's intentions? That I acted as a constrained, a passive instrument of his will? What signifies now the opinion thou mayst entertain of me? Thou art lost; and I, miserable wretch, stand here only to assure thee of it, only to lament thy doom.

EGMONT. What strange voice, what unexpected consolation comes thus to cheer my passage to the grave? Thou, the son of my first, of almost my only enemy, thou dost pity me, thou art not associated with my murderers? Speak! In what light must I regard thee?

FERDINAND. Cruel father! Yes, I recognize thy nature in this command. Thou didst know my heart, my disposition, which thou hast so often censured as the inheritance of a tender-hearted mother. To mould me into thine own likeness thou hast sent me hither. Thou dost compel me to behold this man on the verge of the yawning grave, in the grasp of an arbitrary doom, that I may experience the profoundest anguish; that thus, rendered callous to every fate, I may henceforth meet every event with a heart unmoved.

EGMONT. I am amazed! Be calm! Act, speak like a man.

FERDINAND. Oh, that I were a woman! That they

might say—what moves, what agitates thee? Tell me of a greater, a more monstrous crime, make me the spectator of a more direful deed; I will thank thee, I will say: this was nothing.

EGMONT. Thou dost forget thyself. Consider where thou art!

FERDINAND. Let this passion rage, let me give vent to my anguish! I will not seem composed when my whole inner being is convulsed. Thee must I behold here? Thee? It is horrible! Thou understandest me not! How shouldst thou understand me? Egmont! Egmont!

(Falling on his neck.)

EGMONT. Explain this mystery.

FERDINAND. It is no mystery.

EGMONT. How can the fate of a mere stranger thus deeply move thee?

FERDINAND. Not a stranger! Thou art no stranger to me. Thy name it was that, even from my boyhood, shone before me like a star in heaven! How often have I made inquiries concerning thee, and listened to the story of thy deeds. The youth is the hope of the boy, the man of the youth. Thus didst thou walk before me, ever before me; I saw thee without envy, and followed after, step by step; at length I hoped to see thee—I saw thee, and my heart flew to thy embrace. I had destined thee for myself, and when I beheld thee, I made choice of thee anew. I hoped now to know thee, to live with thee, to be thy friend,—thy—'tis over now and I see thee here!

EGMONT. My friend, if it can be any comfort to thee, be assured that the very moment we met my heart was drawn towards thee. Now listen! Let us exchange a few quiet words. Tell me: is it the stern, the settled purpose of thy father to take my life?

FERDINAND. It is.

EGMONT. This sentence is not a mere empty scarecrow, designed to terrify me, to punish me through fear and intimidation, to humiliate me, that he may then raise me again by the royal favour?

FERDINAND. Alas, no! At first I flattered myself with this delusive hope; and even then my heart was filled with grief and anguish to behold thee thus. Thy doom is

real! Is certain! No, I cannot command myself. Who will counsel, who will aid me, to meet the inevitable?

EGMONT. Hearken then to me! If thy heart is impelled so powerfully in my favour, if thou dost abhor the tyranny that holds me fettered, then deliver me! The moments are precious. Thou art the son of the all-powerful, and thou hast power thyself. Let us fly! I know the roads; the means of effecting our escape cannot be unknown to thee. These walls, a few short miles, alone separate me from my friends. Loose these fetters, conduct me to them; be ours. The king, on some future day, will doubtless thank my deliverer. Now he is taken by surprise, or perchance he is ignorant of the whole proceeding. Thy father ventures on this daring step, and majesty, though horror-struck at the deed, must needs sanction the irrevocable. Thou dost deliberate? Oh, contrive for me the way to freedom! Speak; nourish hope in a living soul.

FERDINAND. Cease! Oh cease! Every word deepens my despair. There is here no outlet, no counsel, no escape.—'Tis this thought that tortures me, that seizes my heart, and rends it as with talons. I have myself spread the net; I know its firm, inextricable knots; I know that every avenue is barred alike to courage and to stratagem. I feel that I too, like thyself, like all the rest, am fettered. Think'st thou that I should give way to lamentation if any means of safety remained untried? I have thrown myself at his feet, remonstrated, implored. He has sent me hither, in order to blast in this fatal moment, every remnant of joy and happiness that yet survived within my heart.

EGMONT. And is there no deliverance?

FERDINAND. None!

EGMONT (*stamping his foot*). No deliverance!—Sweet life! Sweet, pleasant habitude of existence and of activity! from thee must I part! So calmly part! Not in the tumult of battle, amid the din of arms, the excitement of the fray, dost thou send me a hasty farewell; thine is no hurried leave; thou dost not abridge the moment of separation. Once more let me clasp thy hand, gaze once more into thine eyes, feel with keen emotion, thy beauty

and thy worth, then resolutely tear myself away, and say;—depart!

FERDINAND. Must I stand by, and look passively on; unable to save thee, or to give thee aid! What voice avails for lamentation! What heart but must break under the pressure of such anguish?

EGMONT. Be calm!

FERDINAND. Thou canst be calm, thou canst renounce, led on by necessity, thou canst advance to the direful struggle, with the courage of a hero. What can I do? What ought I to do? Thou dost conquer thyself and us; thou art the victor; I survive both myself and thee. I have lost my light at the banquet, my banner on the field. The future lies before me, dark, desolate, perplexed.

EGMONT. Young friend, whom by a strange fatality, at the same moment, I both win and lose, who dost feel for me, who dost suffer for me the agonies of death,—look on me;—thou wilt not lose me. If my life was a mirror in which thou didst love to contemplate thyself, so be also my death. Men are not together only when in each other's presence;—the distant, the departed, also live for us. I shall live for thee, and for myself I have lived long enough. I have enjoyed each day; each day, I have performed, with prompt activity, the duties enjoined by my conscience. Now my life ends, as it might have ended, long, long, ago, on the sands of Gravelines. I shall cease to live; but I have lived. My friend, follow in my steps, lead a cheerful and a joyous life, and dread not the approach of death.

FERDINAND. Thou shouldst have saved thyself for us, thou couldst have saved thyself. Thou art the cause of thine own destruction. Often have I listened when able men discoursed concerning thee; foes and friends, they would dispute long as to thy worth; but on one point they were agreed, none ventured to deny, every one confessed, that thou wert treading a dangerous path. How often have I longed to warn thee! Hadst thou then no friends?

EGMONT. I was warned.

FERDINAND. And when I found all these allegations, point for point, in the indictment, together with thy answers, containing much that might serve to palliate thy

conduct, but no evidence weighty enough fully to exculpate thee——

EGMONT. No more of this. Man imagines that he directs his life, that he governs his actions, when in fact his existence is irresistibly controlled by his destiny. Let us not dwell upon this subject; these reflections I can dismiss with ease—not so my apprehensions for these provinces; yet they too will be cared for. Could my blood flow for many, bring peace to my people, how freely should it flow! Alas! This may not be. Yet it ill becomes a man idly to speculate, when the power to act is no longer his. If thou canst restrain or guide the fatal power of thy father; do so. Alas, who can?—Farewell!

FERDINAND. I cannot leave thee.

EGMONT. Let me urgently recommend my followers to thy care! I have worthy men in my service; let them not be dispersed, let them not become destitute! How fares it with Richard, my secretary?

FERDINAND. He is gone before thee. They have beheaded him, as thy accomplice in high treason.

EGMONT. Poor soul!—Yet one word, and then farewell, I can no more. However powerfully the spirit may be stirred, nature at length irresistibly asserts her rights; and like a child, who, enveloped in a serpent's folds, enjoys refreshing slumber, so the weary one lays himself down to rest before the gates of death, and sleeps soundly, as though a toilsome journey yet lay before him.—One word more,—I know a maiden; thou wilt not despise her because she was mine. Since I can recommend her to thy care, I shall die in peace. Thy soul is noble; in such a man, a woman is sure to find a protector. Lives my old Adolphus? Is he free?

FERDINAND. The active old man, who always attended thee on horseback?

EGMONT. The same.

FERDINAND. He lives, he is free.

EGMONT. He knows her dwelling; let him guide thy steps thither, and reward him to his dying day, for having shown thee the way to this jewel.—Farewell!

FERDINAND. I cannot leave thee.

EGMONT (*urging him towards the door*). Farewell!

FERDINAND. Oh, let me linger yet a moment!

EGMONT. No leave-taking, my friend.

(*He accompanies FERDINAND to the door, and then tears himself away; FERDINAND, overwhelmed with grief, hastily retires.*)

EGMONT (*alone*).

EGMONT. Cruel man! Thou didst not think to render me this service through thy son. He has been the means of relieving my mind from the pressure of care and sorrow, from fear and every anxious feeling. Gently, yet urgently, nature claims her final tribute. 'Tis past!—'Tis resolved! And the reflections which, in the suspense of last night, kept me wakeful on my couch, now with resistless certainty lull my senses to repose.

(*He seats himself upon the couch; music.*)

Sweet sleep! Like the purest happiness, thou comest most willingly, uninvited, unsought. Thou dost loosen the knots of earnest thoughts, dost mingle all images of joy and of sorrow, unimpeded the circle of inner harmony flows on, and wrapped in fond delusion, we sink into oblivion, and cease to be.

(*He sleeps; music accompanies his slumber. Behind his couch the wall appears to open and discovers a brilliant apparition. Freedom, in a celestial garb, surrounded by a glory, reposes on a cloud. Her features are those of CLARA and she inclines towards the sleeping hero. Her countenance betokens compassion, she seems to lament his fate. Quickly she recovers herself and with an encouraging gesture exhibits the symbols of freedom, the bundle of arrows, with the staff and cap. She encourages him to be of good cheer, and while she signifies to him that his death will secure the freedom of the provinces, she hails him as a conqueror, and extends to him a laurel crown. As the wreath approaches his head, EGMONT moves like one asleep, and reclines with his face towards her. She holds the wreath suspended over his head;—martial music is heard in the distance, at the first sound the vision disappears. The music grows louder and louder. Egmont awakes. The prison is dimly illuminated by the dawn.—His first impulse is*

to lift his hand to his head, he stands up, and gazes round, his hand still upraised.)

The crown is vanished ! Beautiful vision, the light of day has frightened thee ! Yes, they revealed themselves to my sight uniting in one radiant form the two sweetest joys of my heart. Divine Liberty borrowed the mien of my beloved one ; the lovely maiden arrayed herself in the celestial garb of my friend. In a solemn moment they appeared united, with aspect more earnest than tender. With blood-stained feet the vision approached, the waving folds of her robe also were tinged with blood. It was my blood, and the blood of many brave hearts. No ! It shall not be shed in vain ! Forward ! Brave people ! The goddess of liberty leads you on ! And as the sea breaks through and destroys the barriers that would oppose its fury, so do ye overwhelm the bulwark of tyranny, and with your impetuous flood sweep it away from the land which it usurps. *(Drums.)*

Hark ! Hark ! How often has this sound summoned my joyous steps to the field of battle and of victory ! How bravely did I tread, with my gallant comrades, the dangerous path of fame ! And now, from this dungeon I shall go forth, to meet a glorious death ; I die for freedom, for whose cause I have lived and fought, and for whom I now offer myself up a sorrowing sacrifice.

(The background is occupied by Spanish soldiers with halberts.)

Yes, lead them on ! Close your ranks, ye terrify me not. I am accustomed to stand amid the serried ranks of war, and environed by the threatening forms of death, to feel, with double zest, the energy of life. *(Drums.)*

The foe closes round on every side ! Swords are flashing ; courage, friends ! Behind are your parents, your wives, your children ! *(Pointing to the guard.)*

And these are impelled by the word of their leader, not by their own free will. Protect your homes ! And to save those who are most dear to you, be ready to follow my example, and to fall with joy.

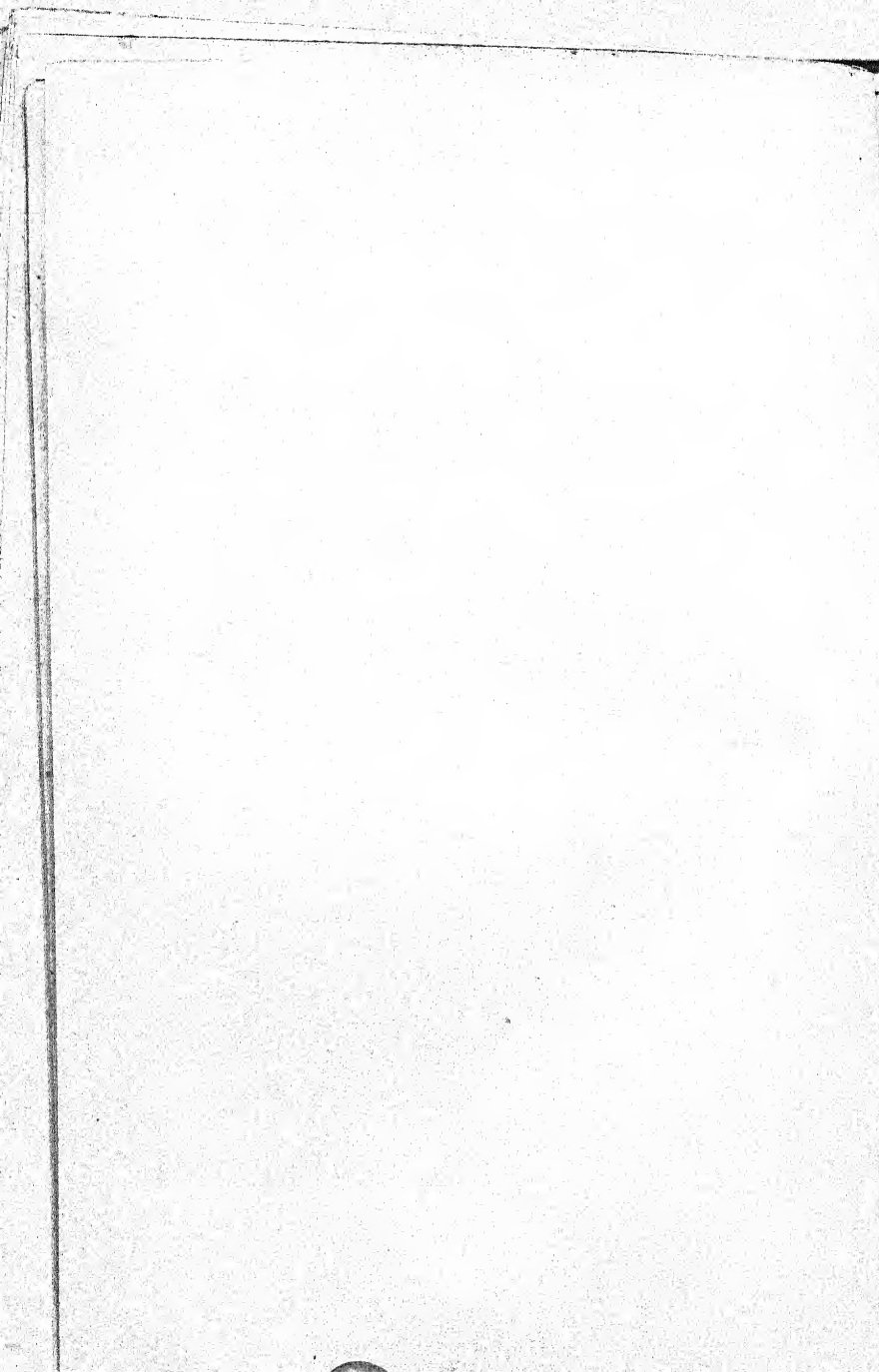
(Drums. As he advances through the guards towards the door in the background, the curtain falls. The music joins in, and the scene closes with a symphony of victory.)

TORQUATO TASSO.

A DRAMA IN FIVE ACTS.

TRANSLATED BY ANNA SWANWICK.

This drama was written first in prose; during Goethe's residence at Rome in 1786-88 he began to versify it, and completed it on his journey home.



INTRODUCTION.

THE annals of biography offer no page the perusal of which awakens a greater variety of emotions than that which records the fate of Torquato Tasso. This great poet, distinguished alike by his genius and his misfortunes, concentrates in his own person the deepest interests of humanity; while the mystery which broods over his derangement and his love, imparts to his story the air rather of poetic fiction than of sober truth. Goethe's poem, founded upon the residence of Tasso at the court of Ferrara, is justly celebrated for its fine delineations of character and its profound insight into the depths of the human heart. It exhibits a striking picture of the great bard at the most momentous period of his existence, which was signalized by the completion of his immortal work; and though the action of the drama embraces only a few hours, by skilfully availing himself of retrospect and anticipation, Goethe has presented us with a beautiful epitome of the poet's life.

Thus, in the third scene of the drama, Tasso alludes to his early childhood, the sorrows of which he has so pathetically sung; we accompany the youthful bard, in his twenty-second year, to the brilliant court of Ferrara, where he arrived at a period when the nuptials of the Duke with the Emperor's sister were celebrated with unrivalled splendour. At the conclusion of these festivities, he was presented by the Princess Lucretia to her sister,

Leonora, who was destined to exert such a powerful influence over his future life; we behold him the honoured and cherished inmate of Belriguardo, a magnificent palace, surrounded by beautiful gardens, where the Dukes of Ferrara were accustomed to retire with their most favoured courtiers, and where, under the inspiring influences of love, beauty, and court favour, he completed his '*Gerusalemme Liberata*,' one of the proudest monuments of human genius.

Goethe has with great skill made us acquainted with some of the circumstances which, acting upon the peculiar temperament of the poet, at length induced the mental disorder which cast so dark a shadow over his later years. His hopeless love for Leonora no doubt conspired with other causes to unsettle his fine intellect,—a calamity which in him appears like the bewilderment of a mind suddenly awakened, from the visions of poetry and love passionately cherished for so many years, into the cold realities of actual life, where his too sensitive ear was stunned by the harsh and discordant voices of envy and superstition. We are thus prepared for his distracted flight from Ferrara, and Goethe has introduced prospectively the touching incident related by Manso,—how, in the disguise of a shepherd, he presented himself to his sister Cornelia, to whom he related his story in language so pathetic, that she fainted from the violence of her grief.

His return to Ferrara, his imprisonment in the Hospital of Santa Anna, and his subsequent miserable wanderings from city to city, are not mentioned in the drama; but the allusion of Alphonso to the crown which should adorn him on the Capitol, brings to our remembrance the affecting circumstances of his death.

It appears from his letters, that at one period of his life, he earnestly desired a triumph similar to that which

Petrarca had enjoyed; but when at length this honour was accorded him, when a period was assigned for this splendid pageant, a change had come over his spirit. His long sufferings had weaned his thoughts from earth; he felt that the hand of death was upon him, and hoped—to use his own words—“to go crowned, not as a poet to the Capitol, but with glory as a saint to Heaven.” On the eve of the day appointed for the ceremony, he expired at the monastery of Saint Onofrio, and his remains, habited in a magnificent toga, and adorned with a laurel crown, were carried in procession through the streets of Rome.

Goethe has faithfully portrayed the times in which Tasso lived, and circumstances apparently trivial have an historical significance, and impart an air of reality to the drama. Thus the fanciful occupation and picturesque attire of the Princess and Countess at the opening of the piece, transport us at once to that graceful court where the pastoral drama was invented and refined, and where, not long before, Tasso's ‘*Aminta*,’ which is considered one of the most beautiful specimens of this species of composition, had been performed for the first time with enthusiastic applause.

The crown adorning the bust of Ariosto, together with the enthusiastic admiration expressed for that poet by Antonio, is likewise characteristic of the age. The ‘*Orlando Furioso*’ had been composed at the same court about fifty years before, and had become so universally popular, that, according to Bernardo Tasso, the father of Torquato, “neither learned man nor artisan, no youth, no maid, no old man, could be satisfied with a single perusal;—passengers in the streets, sailors in their boats, and virgins in their chambers, sang for their disport the stanzas of Ariosto.”*

* Black's ‘*Life of Tasso*.’

The project of dethroning this monarch of Parnassus, or, at least, of placing upon his own brow a crown as glorious, appears from his own letters early to have awakened the ambition of Tasso.

The subordinate characters of the drama are also historical portraits. Alphonso II. is represented by his biographers as the liberal patron of the arts, and as treating Tasso at this period with marked consideration; nor had he yet manifested that implacable and revengeful spirit which has rendered his memory justly hateful to posterity. In the relation which subsisted between this prince and Tasso, Goethe has exhibited the evils resulting from the false spirit of patronage prevalent at that period throughout Italy, when talent was regarded as the necessary appendage of rank, and works of genius were considered as belonging rather to the patron than to the individual by whom they had been produced.

Antonio Montecatino, the Duke's secretary, is also drawn from life. He is an admirable personification of that spirit of worldly wisdom which looks principally to material results, and contemplates promotion and court favour as the highest object of ambition. This "earth-born prudence," having little sympathy with poetic genius, affects to treat it with contempt, resents as presumptuous its violation of ordinary rules, holds up its foibles and eccentricities to ridicule, and at the same time envies the homage paid to it by mankind.

At the period of the drama, the court of Ferrara was graced by the presence of Leonora, Countess of Scandiano, in whom Goethe has portrayed a woman eminently graceful and accomplished, but who fails to win our sympathy because her ruling sentiment is vanity. Tasso paid to this young beauty the tribute of public homage, and addressed to her some of his most beautiful sonnets; according to Ginguéné, however, his sentiment for her was

merely poetical, and could easily ally itself with the more genuine, deep, and constant affection which he entertained for Leonora of Este.

Lucretia and Leonora of Este were the daughters of Renée of France, celebrated for her insatiable thirst for knowledge, and for the variety and depth of her studies. She became zealously attached to the tenets of the Reformers, in consequence of which she was deprived of her children, and closely imprisoned for twelve years.

To the intellectual power, the knowledge, heresy, and consequent misfortunes of her unhappy mother, the Princess Leonora twice alludes in the course of the drama. The daughters of this heroic woman inherited her mental superiority, and Leonora, the younger, is celebrated by various writers for her genius, learning, beauty, and early indifference to the pleasure of the world.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

ALPHONSO II., *Duke of Ferrara.*

LEONORA D'ESTE, *Sister to the Duke.*

LEONORA SANVITALE, *Countess of Scandiano.*

TORQUATO TASSO.

ANTONIO MONTECATINO, *Secretary of State.*

TORQUATO TASSO.

ACT I.

SCENE I. *A Garden adorned with busts of the Epic Poets.
To the right a bust of Virgil; to the left, one of Ariosto.*

PRINCESS and LEONORA, *habited as shepherdesses.*

PRINCESS.

Smiling thou dost survey me, Leonora,
And with a smile thou dost survey thyself.
What is it? Let a friend partake thy thought!
Thou seemest pensive, yet thou seemest pleased.

LEONORA.

Yes, I am pleased, my princess, to behold
Us twain in rural fashion thus attir'd.
Two happy shepherd-maidens we appear,
And like the happy we are both employed.
Garlands we wreath, this one, so gay with flowers,
Beneath my hand in varied beauty grows;
Thou hast with higher taste and larger heart
The slender pliant laurel made thy choice.

PRINCESS.

The laurel wreath, which aimlessly I twin'd,
Hath found at once a not unworthy head;
I place it gratefully on Virgil's brow.
(She crowns the bust of Virgil.)

LEONORA.

With my full joyous wreath the lofty brow
Of Master Ludovico, thus I crown—

(She crowns the bust of Aricsto.)

Let him whose sportive sallies never fade,
Receive his tribute from the early spring.

PRINCESS.

My brother is most kind, to bring us here
In this sweet season to our rural haunts;
Here, by the hour, in freedom unrestrain'd,
We may dream back the poet's golden age.
I love this Belriguardo; in my youth
Full many a joyous day I linger'd here,
And this bright sunshine, and this verdant green,
Bring back the feelings of that bygone time.

LEONORA.

Yes, a new world surrounds us! Grateful now
The cooling shelter of these evergreens.
The tuneful murmur of this gurgling spring
Once more revives us. In the morning wind
The tender branches waver to and fro.
The flowers look upwards from their lowly beds,
And smile upon us with their childlike eyes.
The gardener, fearless grown, removes the roof
That screened his citron and his orange-trees;
The azure dome of heaven above us rests;
And, in the far horizon, from the hills
The snow in balmy vapour melts away.

PRINCESS.

Most welcome were to me the genial spring,
Did it not lead my friend away from me.

LEONORA.

My princess, in these sweet and tranquil hours,
Remind me not how soon I must depart.

PRINCESS.

Yon mighty city will restore to thee,
In double measure, what thou leavest here.

LEONORA.

The voice of duty, and the voice of love,
Both call me to my lord, forsaken long,
I bring to him his son, who rapidly
Hath grown in stature, and matured in mind,
Since last they met,—I share his father's joy.
Florence is great and noble, but the worth
Of all her treasur'd riches doth not reach
The prouder jewels that Ferrara boasts.
That city to her people owes her power;
Ferrara grew to greatness through her princes.

PRINCESS.

More through the noble men whom chance led here,
And who in sweet communion here remain'd.

LEONORA.

Chance doth again disperse what chance collects;
A noble nature can alone attract
The noble, and retain them, as ye do.
Around thy brother, and around thyself,
Assemble spirits worthy of you both,
And ye are worthy of your noble sires.
Here the fair light of science and free thought
Was kindled first, while o'er the darkened world
Still hung barbarian gloom. E'en when a child,
The names resounded loudly in mine ear,
Of Hercules and Hippolyte of Este.
My father oft with Florence and with Rome
Extoll'd Ferrara! Oft in youthful dream
Hither I fondly turn'd, now am I here.
Here was Petrarca kindly entertain'd,
And Ariosto found his models here.
Italia boasts no great, no mighty name,
This princely mansion hath not call'd its guest.
In fostering genius we enrich ourselves;

Dost thou present her with a friendly gift,
One far more beautiful she leaves with thee.
The ground is hallow'd where the good man treads;
When centuries have roll'd, his sons shall hear
The deathless echo of his words and deeds.

PRINCESS.

Yes, if those sons have feelings quick as thine;
This happiness full oft I envy thee.

LEONORA.

Which purely and serenely thou, my friend,
As few beside thee, dost thyself enjoy.
When my full heart impels me to express
Promptly and freely what I keenly feel,
Thou feel'st the while more deeply, and—art silent.
Delusive splendour doth not dazzle thee,
Nor wit beguile; and flattery strives in vain
With fawning artifice to win thine ear;
Firm is thy temper, and correct thy taste,
Thy judgment just, and, truly great thyself,
With greatness thou dost ever sympathise.

PRINCESS.

Thou shouldst not to this highest flattery
The garment of confiding friendship lend.

LEONORA.

Friendship is just; she only estimates
The full extent and measure of thy worth.
Let me ascribe to opportunity,
To fortune too, her portion in thy culture,
Still in the end thou hast it, it is thine,
And all extol thy sister and thyself
Before the noblest women of the age.

PRINCESS.

That can but little move me, Leonora,
When I reflect how poor at best we are,
To others more indebted than ourselves.
My knowledge of the ancient languages,

And of the treasures by the past bequeath'd,
I owe my mother, who, in varied lore
And mental power, her daughters far excell'd.
Might either claim comparison with her,
'Tis undeniably Lucretia's right.
Besides, what nature and what chance bestow'd
As property or rank I ne'er esteem'd.
'Tis pleasure to me when the wise converse,
That I their scope and meaning comprehend;
Whether they judge a man of bygone times
And weigh his actions, or of science treat,
Which, when extended and applied to life,
At once exalts and benefits mankind.
Where'er the converse of such men may lead,
I follow gladly, for with ease I follow.
Well pleas'd the strife of argument I hear,
When, round the powers that sway the human breast,
Waking alternately delight and fear,
With grace the lip of eloquence doth play:
And listen gladly when the princely thirst
Of fame, of wide dominion, forms the theme,
When of an able man, the thought profound,
Develop'd skilfully with subtle tact,
Doth not perplex and dazzle, but instruct.

LEONORA.

And then, this grave and serious converse o'er,
Our ear and inner mind with tranquil joy
Upon the poet's tuneful verse repose,
Who through the medium of harmonious sounds
Infuses sweet emotions in the soul.
Thy lofty spirit grasps a wide domain;
Content am I to linger in the isle
Of poesy, her laurel groves among.

PRINCESS.

In this fair land, I'm told, the myrtle blooms
In richer beauty than all other trees;
Here, too, the Muses wander, yet we seek
A friend and playmate 'mong their tuneful choir

Less often than we seek to meet the bard.
Who seems to shun us, nay, appears to flee,
In quest of something that we know not of.
And which perchance is to himself unknown.
How charming were it, if in happy hour
Encountering us, he should with ecstasy
In our fair selves the treasure recognise,
Which in the world he long had sought in vain!

LEONORA.

To your light raillery I must submit,
So light its touch it passeth harmless by.
I honour all men after their desert,
And am in truth toward Tasso only just.
His eye scarce lingers on this earthly scene,
To nature's harmony his ear is tuned.
What history offers, and what life presents,
His bosom promptly and with joy receives,
The widely scatter'd is by him combined,
And his quick feeling animates the dead.
Oft he ennobles what we count for naught;
What others treasure is by him despis'd.
Thus moving in his own enchanted sphere,
The wondrous man doth still allure us on
To wander with him and partake his joy;
Though seeming to approach us, he remains
Remote as ever, and perchance his eye,
Resting on us, sees spirits in our place.

PRINCESS.

Thou hast with taste and truth portray'd the bard,
Who hovers in the shadowy realm of dreams.
And yet reality, it seems to me,
Hath also power to lure him and enchain.
In the sweet sonnets, scattered here and there,
With which we sometimes find our trees adorn'd,
Creating like the golden fruit of old
A new Hesperia, perceiv'st thou not
The gentle tokens of a genuine love?

LEONORA.

In these fair leaves I also take delight.
With all his rich diversity of thought
He glorifies one form in all his strains.
Now he exalts her to the starry heavens
In radiant glory, and before that form
Bows down, like angels in the realms above.
Then stealing after her through silent fields,
He garlands in his wreath each beauteous flower;
And should the form he worships disappear,
Hallows the path her gentle foot hath trod.
Thus like the nightingale, conceal'd in shade,
From his love-laden breast he fills the air
And neighbouring thickets with melodious plaints.
His blissful sadness and his tuneful grief
Charm every ear, enrapture every heart——

PRINCESS.

And Leonora is the favour'd name
Selected for the object of his strains.

LEONORA.

Thy name it is, my princess, as 'tis mine.
It would displease me were it otherwise.
Now I rejoice that under this disguise
He can conceal his sentiment for thee,
And am no less contented with the thought
That this sweet name should also picture me.
Here is no question of an ardent love,
Seeking possession, and with jealous care
Screening its object from another's gaze.
While he enraptur'd contemplates thy worth
He in my lighter nature may rejoice.
He loves not us,—forgive me what I say,—
His lov'd ideal from the spheres he brings,
And doth invest it with the name we bear;
His feeling we participate; we seem
To love the man, yet only love in him
The highest object that can claim our love.

PRINCESS.

In this deep science thou art deeply vers'd,
My Leonora, and thy words in truth
Play on my ear, yet scarcely reach my soul.

LEONORA.

Thou Plato's pupil! and not comprehend
What a mere novice dares to prattle to thee?
It must be then that I have widely err'd;
Yet well I know I do not wholly err.
For love doth in this graceful school appear
No longer as the spoilt and wayward child;
He is the youth whom Psyche hath espous'd:
Who sits in council with the assembled gods.
He hath relinquish'd passion's fickle sway,
He clings no longer with delusion sweet
To outward form and beauty, to atone
For brief excitement by disgust and hate.

PRINCESS.

Here comes my brother! let us not betray
Whither our converse hath conducted us;
Else we shall have his raillery to bear,
As in our dress he found a theme for jest.

SCENE II.

PRINCESS, LEONORA, ALPHONSO.

ALPHONSO.

Tasso I seek, whom nowhere I can find;
And even here, with you, I meet him not.
Can you inform me where he hides himself?

PRINCESS.

I have scarce seen him for the last two days.

ALPHONSO.

'Tis his habitual failing that he seeks
Seclusion rather than society.

I can forgive him when the motley crowd
Thus studiously he shuns, and loves to hold
Free converse with himself in solitude ;
Yet can I not approve, that he should thus
Also the circle of his friends avoid.

LEONORA.

If I mistake not, thou wilt soon, O Prince,
Convert this censure into joyful praise.
To-day I saw him from afar ; he held
A book and scroll, in which at times he wrote,
And then resum'd his walk, then wrote again.
A passing word, which yesterday he spoke,
Seem'd to announce to me his work complete ;
His sole anxiety is now to add
A finished beauty to minuter parts,
That to your grace, to whom he owes so much,
A worthy offering he at length may bring.

ALPHONSO.

A welcome, when he brings it, shall be his,
And long immunity from all restraint.
Great, in proportion to the lively joy
And interest which his noble work inspires,
Is my impatience at its long delay.
After each slow advance he leaves his task ;
He ever changeth, and can ne'er conclude,
Till baffled hope is weary ; for we see
Reluctantly postpon'd to times remote
A pleasure we had fondly deem'd so near.

PRINCESS.

I rather praise the modesty, the care
With which thus, step by step, he nears the goal.
His aim is not to string amusing tales,
Or weave harmonious numbers, which at length,
Like words delusive, die upon the ear.
His numerous rhymes he labours to combine
Into one beautiful, poetic whole ;
And he whose soul this lofty aim inspires,
Must pay devoted homage to the Muse.

Disturb him not, my brother, time alone
Is not the measure of a noble work;
And, is the coming age to share our joy,
We of the present must forget ourselves.

ALPHONSO.

Let us, dear sister, work together here!
As for our mutual good we oft have done.
Am I too eager—thou must then restrain;
Art thou too gentle—I will urge him on.
Then we perchance shall see him at the goal,
Where to behold him we have wished in vain.
His father-land, the world, shall then admire
And view with wonder his completed work.
I shall receive my portion of the fame,
And Tasso will be usher'd into life.
In a contracted sphere, a noble man
Cannot develop all his mental powers.
On him his country and the world must work.
He must endure both censure and applause,
Must be compell'd to estimate aright
Himself and others. Solitude no more
Lulls him delusively with flattering dreams.
Opponents will not, friendship dare not, spare:
Then in the strife the youth puts forth his powers,
Knows what he is, and feels himself a man.

LEONORA.

Thus, will he, Prince, owe everything to thee,
Who hast already done so much for him.
Talents are nurtured best in solitude,—
A character on life's tempestuous sea.
Oh that according to thy rules he would
Model his temper as he forms his taste,
Cease to avoid mankind, nor in his breast
Nurture suspicion into fear and hate!

ALPHONSO.

He only fears mankind who knows them not,
And he will soon misjudge them who avoids.

This is his case, and so by slow degrees
His noble mind is trammell'd and perplex'd.
Thus to secure my favour he betrays,
At times, unseemly ardour; against some
Who, I am well assur'd, are not his foes,
He cherishes suspicion; if by chance
A letter go astray, a hireling leave
His service, or a paper be mislaid,
He sees deception, treachery, and fraud,
Working insidiously to sap his peace.

PRINCESS.

Let us, beloved brother, not forget
That his own nature none can lay aside.
And should a friend, who with us journeyeth,
Injure by chance his foot, we would in sooth
Rather relax our speed, and lend our hand
Gently to aid the sufferer on his way.

ALPHONSO.

Better it were to remedy his pain,
With the physician's aid attempt a cure,
Then with our heal'd and renovated friend
A new career of life with joy pursue.
And yet, dear friends, I hope that I may ne'er
The censure of the cruel leech incur.
I do my utmost to impress his mind
With feelings of security and trust.
Oft purposely in presence of the crowd,
With marks of favour I distinguish him.
Should he complain of aught, I sift it well,
As lately when his chamber he suppos'd
Had been invaded; then, should naught appear
I calmly show him how I view the affair.
And, as we ought to practise every grace—
With Tasso, seeing he deserves it well,
I practise patience; you I'm sure will aid.
I now have brought you to your rural haunts,
And must myself at eve return to town.
For a few moments you will see Antonio;
He calls here for me on his way from Rome.

We have important business to discuss,
Resolves to frame, and letters to indite,
All which compels me to return to town.

PRINCESS.

Wilt thou permit that we return with thee?

ALPHONSO.

Nay, rather linger here in Belriguardo,
Or go together to Consandoli;
Enjoy these lovely days as fancy prompts.

PRINCESS.

Thou canst not stay with us? Not here arrange
All these affairs as well as in the town?

LEONORA.

So soon, thou takest hence Antonio, too,
Who hath so much to tell us touching Rome.

ALPHONSO.

It may not be, ye children; but with him
So soon as possible will I return:
Then shall he tell you all ye wish to hear,
And ye shall help me to reward the man
Who, in my cause, hath labour'd with such zeal.
And when we shall once more have talk'd our fill,
Hither the crowd may come, that mirth and joy
May in our gardens revel, that for me,
As is but meet, some fair one in the shade
May, if I seek her, gladly meet me there.

LEONORA.

And we meanwhile will kindly shut our eyes.

ALPHONSO.

Ye know that I can be forbearing too.

PRINCESS (*turned towards the scene*).

I long have noticed Tasso; hitherward
Slowly he bends his footsteps; suddenly,

As if irresolute, he standeth still;
Anon, with greater speed he draweth near,
Then lingers once again.

ALPHONSO.

Disturb him not,
Nor when the poet dreams and versifies
Intrude upon his musings,—let him roam.

LEONORA.

No, he has seen us, and he comes this way.

SCENE III.

PRINCESS, LEONORA, ALPHONSO, TASSO (*with a volume bound
in parchment*).

TASSO.

Slowly I come to bring my work to thee,
And yet I linger ere presenting it.
Although apparently it seem complete,
Too well I know, it is unfinish'd still.
But, if I cherish'd once an anxious fear
Lest I should bring thee an imperfect work,
A new solicitude constrains me now:
I would not seem ungrateful, nor appear
Unduly anxious; and, as to his friends,
A man can say but simply, "Here I am!"
That they, with kind forbearance, may rejoice.
So I can only say, "Receive my work!"
(*He presents the volume.*)

ALPHONSO.

Thou hast surpris'd me, Tasso, with thy gift,
And made this lovely day a festival.
I hold it then at length within my hands,
And in a certain sense can call it mine.
Long have I wish'd that thou couldst thus resolve,
And say at length "'Tis finish'd! here it is."

TASSO.

Are you contented? then it is complete:
For it belongs to you in every sense.
Were I to contemplate the pains bestow'd
Or dwell upon the written character,
I might, perchance, exclaim, "This work is mine."
But when I mark what 'tis that to my song,
Its inner worth and dignity imparts,
I humbly feel, I owe it all to you.
If Nature from her liberal stores on me
The genial gift of poesy bestow'd,
Capricious Fortune, with malignant power
Had thrust me from her; though this beauteous world
With all its varied splendour lur'd the boy,
Too early was his youthful eye bedimm'd
By his lov'd parents' undeserved distress.
Forth from my lips when I essay'd to sing,
There ever flow'd a melancholy song,
And I accompanied, with plaintive tones,
My father's sorrow and my mother's grief.
'Twas thou alone, who from this narrow sphere
Rais'd me to glorious liberty, reliev'd
From each depressing care my youthful mind,
And gave me freedom, in whose genial air
My spirit could unfold in harmony;
Then whatsoe'er the merit of the work,
Thine be the praise, for it belongs to thee.

ALPHONSO.

A second time thou dost deserve applause,
And honourest modestly thyself and us.

TASSO.

Fain would I say how sensibly I feel
That what I bring is all derived from thee!
The inexperience'd youth—could he produce
The poem from his own unfurnish'd mind?
Could he invent the conduct of the war,
The gallant bearing and the martial skill
Which every hero on the field display'd,

The leader's prudence, and his followers' zeal,
How vigilance the arts of cunning foil'd,—
Hadst thou not, valiant Prince, infus'd it all,
As if my guardian genius thou hadst been,
Through a mere mortal, deigning to reveal
His nature high and inaccessible?

PRINCESS.

Enjoy the work in which we all rejoice!

ALPHONSO.

Enjoy the approbation of the good!

LEONORA.

Rejoice too in thy universal fame!

TASSO.

This single moment is enough for me.
Of you alone I thought while I compos'd:
You to delight was still my highest wish,
You to enrapture was my final aim.
Who doth not in his friends behold the world,
Deserves not that of him the world should hear.
Here is my fatherland, and here the sphere
In which my spirit fondly loves to dwell:
Here I attend and value every hint;
Here speak experience, knowledge, and true taste;
Here stand the present and the future age.
With shy reserve the artist shuns the crowd,—
Its judgment but perplexes. Those alone
With minds like yours can understand and feel,
And such alone should censure and reward!

ALPHONSO.

If thus the present and the future age
We represent, it is not meet that we
Receive the poet's song unrecompens'd.
The laurel wreath, fit chaplet for the bard,
Which e'en the hero, who requires his verse,

Sees without envy round his temples twin'd,
Adorns, thou seest, thy predecessor's brow.

(Pointing to the bust of Virgil.)

Hath chance, hath some kind genius twin'd the wreath,
And brought it hither? Not in vain it thus
Presents itself: Virgil I hear exclaim,
"Wherefore confer this honour on the dead?
They in their lifetime had reward and joy;
Do ye indeed revere the bards of old?
Then to the living bard accord his due.
My marble statue hath been amply crown'd,
And the green laurel branch belongs to life."

(ALPHONSO makes a sign to his sister; she takes the crown from the bust of Virgil, and approaches TASSO: he steps back.)

LEONORA.

Thou dost refuse? Seest thou what hand the wreath,
The fair, the never-fading wreath, presents?

TASSO.

O let me pause; I scarce can comprehend
How after such an hour I still can live.

ALPHONSO.

Live in enjoyment of the high reward,
From which thy inexperience shrinks with fear.

PRINCESS *(raising the crown)*.

Thou dost afford me, Tasso, the rare joy
Of giving silent utterance to my thought.

TASSO.

The beauteous burden from thy honour'd hands,
On my weak head, thus kneeling, I receive.

(He kneels down; the PRINCESS places the crown upon his head.)

LEONORA *(applauding)*.

Long live the poet, for the first time crown'd!
How well the crown adorns the modest man!

(TASSO rises.)

ALPHONSO.

It is an emblem only of that crown
Which shall adorn thee on the Capitol.

PRINCESS.

There louder voices will salute thine ear;
Friendship with lower tones rewards thee here.

TASSO.

Take it, O take it quickly, from my brow!
Pray thee remove it! It doth scorch my locks;
And like a sunbeam, that with fervid heat
Falls on my forehead, burneth in my brain
The power of thought; while fever's fiery glow
Impels my blood. Forgive! it is too much.

LEONORA.

This garland rather doth protect the head
Of him who treads the burning realm of fame,
And with its grateful shelter cools his brow.

TASSO.

I am not worthy to receive its shade,
Which only round the hero's brow should wave.
Ye gods, exalt it high among the clouds,
To float in glory inaccessible,
That, through eternity, my life may be
An endless striving to attain this goal!

ALPHONSO.

He who in youth acquires life's noblest gifts,
Learns early to esteem their priceless worth;
He who in youth enjoys, resigneth not
Without reluctance what he once possess'd;
And he who would possess, must still be arm'd.

TASSO.

And who would arm himself, within his breast
A power must feel, that ne'er forsaketh him.
Ah, it forsakes me now! In happiness
The inborn power subsides, which tutor'd me

To meet injustice with becoming pride,
And steadfastly to face adversity.
Hath the delight, the rapture of this hour,
Dissolv'd the strength and marrow in my limbs?
My knees sink feebly! yet, a second time,
Thou seest me, Princess, here before thee bow'd
Grant my petition, and remove the crown,
That, as awaken'd from a blissful dream,
A new and fresh existence I may feel.

PRINCESS.

If thou with quiet modesty canst wear
The glorious talent from the gods receiv'd,
Learn also now the laurel wreath to wear,
The fairest gift that friendship can bestow.
The brow it once hath worthily adorn'd,
It shall encircle through eternity.

TASSO.

O let me then asham'd from hence retire!
Let me in deepest shades my joy conceal,
As there my sorrow I was wont to shroud.
There will I range alone; no eye will there
Remind me of a bliss so undeserv'd.
And if perchance I should behold a youth
In the clear mirror of a crystal spring,
Who, in the imaged heaven, 'midst rocks and trees
Absorb'd in thought appears, his brow adorn'd
With glory's garland: there, methinks, I see
Elysium mirror'd in the magic flood.
I pause and calmly ask, Who may this be?
What youth of bygone times, so fairly crown'd?
Whence can I learn his name? his high desert?
I linger long, and musing fondly think:
O might there come another, and yet more
To join with him in friendly intercourse!
O could I see assembled round this spring
The bards, the heroes of the olden time!
Could I behold them still united here
As they in life were ever firmly bound!
As with mysterious power the magnet binds

Iron with iron, so do kindred aims
Unite the souls of heroes and of bards.
Himself forgetting, Homer spent his life
In contemplation of two mighty men;
And Alexander in the Elysian fields
Doth Homer and Achilles haste to seek.
O would that I were present to behold
Those mighty spirits in communion met.

LEONORA.

Awake! awake! let us not feel that thou
The present quite forgettest in the past.

TASSO.

It is the present that inspireth me;
Absent I seem alone, I am entranced!

PRINCESS.

When thou dost speak with spirits, I rejoice
The voice is human, and I gladly hear.

(A Page steps to the PRINCE.)

ALPHONSO.

He is arriv'd! and in a happy hour;
Antonio! Bring him hither;—here he comes!

SCENE IV.

PRINCESS, LEONORA, ALPHONSO, TASSO, ANTONIO.

ALPHONSO.

Thou'rt doubly welcome! thou who bring'st at once
Thyself and welcome tidings.

PRINCESS.

Welcome here!

ANTONIO.

Scarce dare I venture to express the joy
Which in your presence quickens me anew.
In your society I find restor'd

What I have miss'd so long. You seem content
With what I have accomplish'd, what achieved ;
So am I recompens'd for every care,
For many days impatiently endur'd,
And many others wasted purposely.
At length our wish is gain'd,—the strife is o'er.

LEONORA.

I also greet thee, though in sooth displeased ;
Thou dost arrive when I must hence depart.

ANTONIO.

As if to mar my perfect happiness,
One lovely part forthwith thou takest hence.

TASSO.

My greetings too! I also shall rejoice
In converse with the much experienc'd man.

ANTONIO.

Thou'lt find me true, whenever thou wilt deign
To glance awhile from thy world into mine.

ALPHONSO.

Though thou by letter hast announc'd to me
The progress and the issue of our cause,
Full many questions I have yet to ask
Touching the course thou hast pursued therein.
In that strange region a well-measur'd step
Alone conducts us to our destin'd goal.
Who doth his sovereign's interest purely seek,
In Rome a hard position must maintain ;
For Rome gives nothing, while she grasps at all ;
Let him who thither goes some boon to claim,
Go well provided, and esteem himself
Most happy, if e'en then he gaineth aught.

ANTONIO.

'Tis neither my demeanour nor my art
By which thy will hath been accomplish'd, Prince.
For where the skill which at the Vatican

Would not be over-master'd? Much conspir'd
Which I could use in furth'rance of our cause.
Pope Gregory salutes and blesses thee.
That aged man, that sovereign most august,
Who on his brow the load of empire bears,
Recalls the time when he embrac'd thee last
With pleasure. He who can distinguish men
Knows and extols thee highly. For thy sake
He hath done much.

ALPHONSO.

So far as 'tis sincere,
His good opinion cannot but rejoice me.
But well thou knowest, from the Vatican
The Pope sees empires dwindled at his feet;
Princes and men must needs seem small indeed.
Confess what was it most assisted thee.

ANTONIO.

Good! if thou will'st: the Pope's exalted mind.
To him the small seems small, the great seems great.
That he may wield the empire of the world,
He to his neighbour yields with kind good-will.
The strip of land, which he resigns to thee,
He knoweth, like thy friendship, well to prize.
Italia must be tranquil, friends alone
Will he behold around him, peace must reign
Upon his borders, that of Christendom
The might which he so potently directs,
May smite at once the Heretic and Turk.

PRINCESS.

And is it known what men he most esteems,
And who approach him confidentially?

ANTONIO.

The experienc'd man alone can win his ear,
The active man his favour and esteem.
He, who from early youth has serv'd the state,
Commands it now, ruling those very courts
Which, in his office of ambassador,
He had observed and guided years before.

The world lies spread before his searching gaze,
Clear as the interests of his own domain.
In action we must yield him our applause,
And mark with joy, when time unfolds the plans
Which his deep forethought fashion'd long before.
There is no fairer prospect in the world
Than to behold a prince who wisely rules;
A realm where every one obeys with pride,
Where each imagines that he serves himself,
Because 'tis justice only that commands.

LEONORA.

How ardently I long to view that realm!

ALPHONSO.

Doubtless that thou mayst play thy part therein;
For Leonora never could remain
A mere spectator: meet it were, fair friend,
If now and then we let your gentle hands
Join in the mighty game—Say, is't not so?

LEONORA (*to* ALPHONSO.)

Thou wouldst provoke me,—thou shalt not succeed.

ALPHONSO.

I am already deeply in thy debt.

LEONORA.

Good; then to-day I will remain in thine!
Forgive, and do not interrupt me now.

(*To* ANTONIO.)

Say, hath he for his relatives done much?

ANTONIO.

Nor more nor less than equity allows.
The potentate, who doth neglect his friends,
Is even by the people justly blam'd.
With wise discretion Gregory employs
His friends as trusty servants of the state,
And thus fulfils at once two kindred claims.

TASSO.

Doth science, do the liberal arts enjoy
His fostering care? and doth he emulate
The glorious princes of the olden time?

ANTONIO.

He honours science when it is of use,—
Teaching to govern states, to know mankind;
He prizes art when it embellishes,—
When it exalts and beautifies his Rome,
Erecting palaces and temples there,
Which rank among the marvels of this earth.
Within his sphere of influence he admits
Naught inefficient, and alone esteems
The active cause and instrument of good.

ALPHONSO.

Thou thinkest, then, that we may soon conclude
The whole affair? that no impediments
Will finally be scatter'd in our way?

ANTONIO.

Unless I greatly err, 'twill but require
A few brief letters and thy signature
To bring this contest to a final close.

ALPHONSO.

This day with justice then I may proclaim
A season of prosperity and joy.
My frontiers are enlarg'd and made secure;
Thou hast accomplish'd all without the sword,
And hence deservest well a civic crown.
Our ladies on some beauteous morn shall twine
A wreath of oak to bind around thy brow.
Meanwhile our poet hath enrich'd us too;
He, by his conquest of Jerusalem,
Hath put our modern Christendom to shame.
With joyous spirit and unwearied zeal,
A high and distant goal he had attain'd;
For his achievement thou behold'st him crown'd.

ANTONIO.

Thou solvest an enigma. Two crown'd heads
I saw with wonder on arriving here.

TASSO.

While thou dost gaze upon my happiness,
With the same glance, O couldst thou view my heart,
And witness there my deep humility!

ANTONIO.

How lavishly Alphonso can reward
I long have known; thou only provest now
What all enjoy who come within its sphere.

PRINCES.

When thou shalt see the work he hath achieved,
Thou wilt esteem us moderate and just.
The first, the silent, witnesses are we,
Of praises, which the world and future years
In tenfold measure will accord to him.

ANTONIO.

Through you his fame is certain. Who so bold
To entertain a doubt when you commend?
But tell me, who on Ariosto's brow
Hath placed this wreath?

LEONORA.

This hand.

ANTONIO.

It hath done well.

It more becomes him than a laurel crown.
As o'er her fruitful bosom Nature throws
Her variegated robe of beauteous green,
So he enshrouds in Fable's flowery garb,
Whatever can conspire to render man
Worthy of love and honour. Power and taste,
Experience, understanding, and content,
And a pure feeling for the good and true,
Pervade the spirit of his every song,

And there appear in person, to repose
'Neath blossoming trees, besprinkled by the snow
Of lightly-falling flowers, their heads entwin'd
With rosy garlands, while the sportive Loves
With frolic humour weave their magic spells.
A copious fountain, gurgling near, displays
Strange variegated fish, and all the air
Is vocal with the song of wondrous birds;
Strange cattle pasture in the bowers and glades;
Half hid in verdure, Folly slily lurks:
At times, resounding from a golden cloud,
The voice of Wisdom utters lofty truth,
While Madness, from a wild harmonious lute,
Scatters forth bursts of fitful harmony,
Yet all the while the justest measure holds.
He who aspires to emulate this man,
E'en for his boldness well deserves a crown.
Forgive me if I feel myself inspir'd,
Like one entranc'd forget both time and place,
And fail to weigh my words; for all these crowns,
These poets, and the festival attire
Of these fair ladies, have transported me
Out of myself into a foreign land.

PRINCESS.

Who thus can prize one species of desert,
Will not misjudge another. Thou to us
Some future day, shalt show in Tasso's song
What we can feel, and thou canst comprehend.

ALPHONSO.

Come now, Antonio! many things remain
Whereof I am desirous to inquire.
Then till the setting of the sun thou shalt
Attend the ladies, Follow me,—Farewell!

(ANTONIO follows the Prince, TASSO the Ladies.)

ACT II.

SCENE I. *A Room.*

PRINCESS, TASSO.

TASSO.

I with uncertain footsteps follow thee,
O Princess, there arise within my soul
Thoughts without rule and measure. Solitude
Appears to beckon me, complaisantly
She whispers : " Hither come, I will allay,
Within thy breast, the newly-wakened doubt."
Yet catch I but a glimpse of thee, or takes
My listening ear one utterance from thy lip,
At once a new-born day around me shines,
And all the fetters vanish from my soul.
To thee I freely will confess, the man
Who unexpectedly appear'd among us
Hath rudely wak'd me from a beauteous dream ;
So strangely have his nature and his words
Affected me, that more than ever now
A want of inward harmony I feel,
And a distracting conflict with myself.

PRINCESS.

'Tis not to be expected that a friend,
Who long hath sojourn'd in a foreign land,
Should in the moment of his first return,
The tone of former times at once resume ;
He in his inner mind is still unchang'd,
And a few days of intercourse will tune
The jarring strings, until they blend once more
In perfect harmony. When he shall know
The greatness of the work thou hast achiev'd,
Believe me, he will place thee by the bard.
Whom as a giant now he sets before thee.

TASSO.

My Princess, Ariosto's praise from him

Has more delighted than offended me.
Consoling 'tis, to know the man renown'd,
Whom as our model we have placed before us;
An inward voice then whispers to the heart
"Canst thou obtain a portion of his worth,
A portion of his fame is also thine."
No, that which hath most deeply mov'd my heart,
Which even now completely fills my soul,
Was the majestic picture of that world,
Which, with its living, restless, mighty forms
Around one great and prudent man revolves,
And runs with measur'd steps the destin'd course
Prescrib'd beforehand by the demigod.
I listen'd eagerly, and heard with joy
The wise discourse of the experienc'd man;
But ah! the more I heard, the more I felt
Mine own unworthiness, and fear'd that I
Like empty sound, might dissipate in air,
Or vanish like an echo or a dream.

PRINCESS.

And yet erewhile thou didst so truly feel
How bard and hero for each other live,
How bard and hero to each other tend,
And toward each other know no envious thought.
Noble in truth are deeds deserving fame,
But it is also noble to transmit
The lofty grandeur of heroic deeds,
Through worthy song, to our posterity.
Be satisfied to contemplate in peace,
From a small, shelt'ring state, as from the shore
The wild and stormy current of the world.

TASSO.

Was it not here, amaz'd, I first beheld
The high reward on valiant deeds bestow'd
An inexperience'd youth I here arriv'd,
When festival on festival conspir'd
To render this the centre of renown.
O what a scene Ferrara then display'd!

The wide arena, where in all its pomp
Accomplish'd valour should its skill display,
Was bounded by a circle, whose high worth
The sun might seek to parallel in vain.
The fairest women sat assembled there,
And men the most distinguish'd of the age.
Amaz'd the eye ran o'er the noble throng;
Proudly I cried, "And 'tis our Fatherland,
That small, sea-girded land, hath sent them here.
They constitute the noblest court that e'er
On honour, worth, or virtue, judgment pass'd.
Survey them singly, thou wilt not find one
Of whom his neighbour needs to feel ashamed!"—
And then the lists were open'd, chargers pranc'd,
Esquires press'd forward, helmets brightly gleam'd,
The trumpet sounded, shivering lances split,
The din of clanging helm and shield was heard,
And for a moment eddying dust conceal'd
The victor's honour and the vanquish'd's shame.
O let me draw a curtain o'er the scene,
The all too brilliant spectacle conceal,
That in this tranquil hour I may not feel
Too painfully mine own unworthiness!

PRINCESS.

If that bright circle and those noble deeds
Arous'd thee then to enterprize and toil,
I could the while, young friend, have tutor'd thee
In the still lesson of calm sufferance.
The brilliant festival thou dost extol,
Which then and since a hundred voices prais'd,
I did not witness. In a lonely spot,
So tranquil that unbroken on the ear
Joy's lightest echo faintly died away,
A prey to pain and melancholy thoughts,
I was compell'd to pass the tedious hours.
Before me hover'd on extended wing,
Death's awful form, concealing from my view
The prospect of this ever-changing world.
Slowly it disappear'd, and I beheld,
As through a veil, the varied hues of life,

Pleasing but indistinct; while living forms
Began once more to flicker through the gloom.
Still feeble, and supported by my women,
For the first time my silent room I left,
When hither, full of happiness and life,
Thee leading by the hand, Lucretia came.
A stranger then, thou, Tasso, wast the first
To welcome me on my return to life.
Much then I hoped for both of us, and hope
Hath not, methinks, deceiv'd us hitherto.

TASSO.

Stunn'd by the tumult, dazzled by the glare
Impetuous passions stirring in my breast,
I by thy sister's side pursued my way
In silence through the stately corridors,
Then in the chamber enter'd, where ere long
Thou didst appear supported by thy women.
O, what a moment! Princess, pardon me!
As in the presence of a deity
The victim of enchantment feels with joy
His frenzied spirit from delusion freed;
So was my soul from every phantasy,
From every passion, every false desire
Restor'd at once by one calm glance of thine.
And if, before, my inexperience'd mind
Had lost itself in infinite desires,
I then, with shame, first turn'd my gaze within,
And recognis'd the truly valuable.
Thus on the wide sea-shore we seek in vain
The pearl, reposing in its silent shell.

PRINCESS.

'Twas the commencement of a happy time.
And had Urbino's Duke not led away
My sister from us, many years had passed
For us in calm, unclouded happiness.
But now, alas! we miss her all too much,
Miss her free spirit, buoyancy, and life,
And the rich wit of the accomplished woman.

TASSO.

Too well I know since she departed hence,
None hath been able to supply to thee
The pure enjoyment which her presence gave.
Alas, how often hath it griev'd my soul !
How often have I in the silent grove
Pour'd forth my lamentation ! How ! I cried,
Is it her sister's right and joy alone
To be a treasure to the dear one's heart ?
Does then no other soul respond to hers,
No other heart her confidence deserve ?
Are soul and wit extinguish'd ? and should one,
How great soe'er her worth, engross her love ?
Forgive me, Princess ! Often I have wish'd
I could be something to thee,—little, perhaps,
But something ; not with words alone, with deeds
I wish'd to be so, and in life to prove
How I had worshipp'd thee in solitude.
But I could ne'er succeed, and but too oft
In error wounded thee, offending one
By thee protected, or perplexing more
What thou didst wish to solve, and thus, alas !
E'en in the moment when I fondly strove
To draw more near thee, felt more distant still.

PRINCESS.

Thy wish I never have misconstrued, Tasso ;
How thou dost prejudice thyself I know ;
Unlike my sister, who possess'd the art
Of living happily with every one,
After so many years, thou art in sooth
Thyself well nigh unfriended.

TASSO.

Censure me !

But after say, where shall I find the man,
The woman where, to whom as unto thee
I freely can unbosom every thought ?

PRINCESS.

Thou shouldest in my brother more confide.

TASSO.

He is my Prince!—Yet do not hence suppose
That freedom's lawless impulse swells my breast.
Man is not born for freedom, and to serve
A prince deserving honour and esteem
Is a pure pleasure to a noble mind.
He is my sovereign, of that great word
I deeply feel the full significance.
I must be silent when he speaks, and learn
To do what he commandeth, though perchance
My heart and understanding both rebel.

PRINCESS.

That with my brother never can befall.
And in Antonio, who is now return'd,
Thou wilt possess another prudent friend.

TASSO.

I hoped it once, now almost I despair.
His converse how instructive, and his words
How useful in a thousand instances!
For he possesses, I may truly say,
All that in me is wanting. But, alas!
When round his cradle all the Gods assembled
To bring their gifts, the Graces were not there;
And he who lacks what these fair Powers impart,
May much possess, may much communicate,
But on his bosom we can ne'er repose.

PRINCESS.

But we can trust in him, and that is much.
Thou shouldst not, Tasso, in one man expect
All qualities combined; Antonio
What he hath promised surely will perform.
If he have once declared himself thy friend,
He'll care for thee, where thou dost fail thyself.
Ye must be friends! I cherish the fond hope
Ere long this gracious work to consummate.
Only oppose me not, as is thy wont.
Then, Leonora long hath sojourn'd here,
Who is at once refined and elegant;

Her easy manners banish all restraint,
Yet thou hast ne'er approach'd her as she wish'd.

TASSO.

To thee I hearken'd, or believe me, Princess,
I should have rather shunn'd her than approach'd.
Though she appear so kind, I know not why,
I can but rarely feel at ease with her ;
E'en when her purpose is to aid her friends,
They feel the purpose, and are thence constrain'd.

PRINCESS.

Upon this pathway, Tasso, nevermore
Will glad companionship be ours ! This track
Leadeth us on through solitary groves
And silent vales to wander ; more and more
The spirit is untun'd, and fondly strives
The golden age, that from the outer world
For aye hath vanish'd, to restore within,
How vain soever the attempt may prove.

TASSO.

O what a word, my Princess, hast thou spoken !
The golden age, ah, whither is it flown,
For which in secret every heart repines ?
When o'er the yet unsubjugated earth,
Men roam'd, like herds, in joyous liberty ;
When on the flow'ry lawn an ancient tree
Lent to the shepherd and the shepherdess
Its grateful shadow, and the leafy grove
Its tender branches lovingly entwined
Around confiding love ; when still and clear,
O'er sands for ever pure, the pearly stream
The nymph's fair form encircled ; when the snake
Glided innoxious through the verdant grass,
And the bold youth pursued the daring faun ;
When every bird winging the limpid air,
And every living thing o'er hill and dale
Proclaim'd to man,—What pleases is allowed.

PRINCESS.

My friend, the golden age hath pass'd away ;

Only the good have power to bring it back;
Shall I confess to thee my secret thought?
The golden age, wherewith the bard is wont
Our spirits to beguile, that lovely prime,
Existed in the past no more than now;
And did it e'er exist, believe me, Tasso,
As then it was, it now may be restored.
Still meet congenial spirits, and enhance
Each other's pleasure in this beauteous world;
But in the motto change one single word,
And say, my friend :—What's fitting is allowed.

TASSO.

Would that of good and noble men were form'd
A great tribunal, to decide for all
What is befitting! then no more would each
Esteem that right which benefits himself.
The man of power acts ever as he lists,
And whatsoe'er he doth is fitting deem'd.

PRINCESS.

Wouldst thou define exactly what is fitting,
Thou shouldst apply, methinks, to noble women;
For them it most behoveth that in life
Naught should be done unseemly or unfit;
Propriety encircles with a wall
The tender, weak, and vulnerable sex.
Where moral order reigneth, women reign,
They only are despis'd where rudeness triumphs;
And wouldst thou touching either sex inquire,
'Tis order woman seeketh; freedom, man.

TASSO.

Thou thinkest us unfeeling, wild, and rude?

PRINCESS.

Not so! but ye with violence pursue
A multitude of objects far remote.
Ye venture for eternity to act,
While we, with views more narrow, on this earth
Seek only one possession, well content

If that with constancy remain our own.
For we, alas ! are of no heart secure,
Whate'er the ardour of its first devotion.
Beauty is transient, which alone ye seem
To hold in honour ; what beside remains
No longer charms,—what doth not charm is dead.
If among men there were who knew to prize
The heart of woman, who could recognise
What treasures of fidelity and love
Are garner'd safely in a woman's breast ;
If the remembrance of bright single hours
Could vividly abide within your souls ;
If your so searching glance could pierce the veil
Which age and wasting sickness o'er us fling ;
If the possession which should satisfy
Waken'd no restless cravings in your hearts ;
Then were our happy days indeed arriv'd,
We then should celebrate our golden age.

TASSO.

Thy words, my Princess, in my breast awake
An old anxiety half lull'd to sleep.

PRINCESS.

What mean'st thou, Tasso ? Freely speak with me.

TASSO.

I oft before have heard, and recently
Again it hath been rumour'd,—had I not
Been told, I might have known it,—princes strive
To win thy hand. What we must needs expect.
We view with dread, nay, almost with despair.
Thou wilt forsake us,—it is natural :
Yet how we shall endure it, know I not.

PRINCESS.

Be for the present moment unconcern'd !
Almost, I might say, unconcern'd for ever.
I am contented still to tarry here,
Nor know I any tie to lure me hence.
And if thou wouldst indeed detain me, Tasso,

Live peaceably with all, so shalt thou lead
A happy life thyself, and I through thee.

TASSO.

Teach me to do whate'er is possible !
My life itself is consecrate to thee.
When to extol thee and to give thee thanks
My heart unfolded, I experienc'd first
The purest happiness that man can feel.
My soul's ideal I first found in thee.
As destiny supreme is rais'd above
The will and counsel of the wisest men,
So tower the gods of earth o'er common mortals.
The rolling surge which we behold with dread,
Doth all unheeded murmur at their feet
Like gentle billows ; they hear not the storm
Which blusters round us, scarcely heed our prayers
And treat us as we helpless children treat,
Letting us fill the air with sighs and plaints.
Thou hast, divine one ! often borne with me,
And like the radiant sun, thy pitying glance
Hath from mine eyelid dried the dew of sorrow.

PRINCESS.

'Tis only just that women cordially
Should meet the poet, whose heroic song
In strains so varied glorifies the sex.
Tender or valiant, thou hast ever known
To represent them amiable and noble ;
And if Armida is deserving hate,
Her love and beauty reconcile us to her.

TASSO.

Whatever in my song doth reach the heart
And find an echo there, I owe to one,
And one alone ! No image undefin'd
Hover'd before my soul, approaching now
In radiant glory, to retire again.
I have myself, with mine own eyes, beheld
The type of every virtue, every grace ;
What I have copied thence will aye endure ;

The heroic love of Tancred to Clorinda,
Erminia's silent and unnotic'd truth,
Sophronia's greatness and Olinda's woe ;
These are not shadows by illusion bred ;
I know they are eternal, for they are.
And what is more deserving to survive,
And silently to work for centuries,
Than the confession of a noble love
Confided modestly to gentle song ?

PRINCESS.

And shall I name to thee another charm
Which, all unconsciously, this song may claim ?
It doth allure us still to listen to it :
We listen, and we think we understand ;
We understand, and yet we censure not,
So with thy song, thou winnest us at last.

TASSO.

O what a heaven thou dost open to me,
My Princess ! if this radiance blinds me not,
I see unhop'd-for and eternal bliss
Descending gloriously on golden beams.

PRINCESS.

No further, Tasso ! many things there are
That we may hope to win with violence ;
While others only can become our own
Through moderation and wise self-restraint.
Such, it is said, is virtue, such is love,
Which is allied to her. Think well of this !

SCENE II.

TASSO.

And art thou then allow'd to raise thine eyes ?
Around thee dar'st thou gaze ? Thou art alone !
O'erheard these pillars what the Princess spake ?
And hast thou witnesses, dumb witnesses
Of thine exalted happiness to fear ?
The sun arises of a new life-day,

Whose splendour dims the light of former days.
The goddess, downward stooping, swiftly bears
Aloft the mortal. What a wide expanse
Is to mine eye discover'd, what a realm!
How richly recompens'd my burning wish!
In dreams the highest happiness seem'd near,
This happiness surpasses all my dreams.
The man born blind conceiveth as he may
Of light and colour; when upon his eye
The daylight pours, he hails a new-born sense.
Full of vague hope and courage, drunk with joy,
Reeling I tread this path. Thou giv'st me much;
Thou givest lavishly, as earth and heaven,
With bounteous hand, dispense their costly gifts,
Demanding in return what such a boon
Alone empowers thee to demand from me.
I must be moderate, I must forbear,
And thus deserve thy cherish'd confidence.
What have I ever done that she should choose me?
What can I do to merit her regard?
Her very confidence doth prove thy worth.
Yes, Princess, to thine every word and look,
Be my whole soul for ever consecrate!
Ask what thou wilt, for I am wholly thine!
To distant regions let her send me forth
In quest of toil, and danger, and renown;
Or in the grove, present the golden lyre,
Devoting me to quiet and her praise.
Hers am I, me possessing, she shall mould!
For her my heart hath garner'd every treasure.
O had some heavenly power bestow'd on me
An organ thousandfold, I scarcely then
Could utter forth my speechless reverence.
The painter's pencil, and the poet's lip,
The sweetest that e'er sipp'd the vernal honey,
I covet now. No! Tasso shall henceforth
Wander no more forlorn, 'mong trees, 'mong men,
Lonely and weak, oppress'd with gloomy care!
He is no more alone, he is with thee.
O would that visibly the noblest deed
Were present here before me, circled round

With grisly danger! Onward I would rush,
And with a joyous spirit risk the life
Now from her hand receiv'd—the choicest men
As comrades I would hail, a noble band,
To execute her will and high behest,
And consummate what seem'd impossible.
Rash mortal! wherefore did thy lip not hide
What thou didst feel, till thou couldst lay thyself
Worthy, and ever worthier, at her feet?
Such was thy purpose, such thy prudent wish!
Yet be it so! 'Tis sweeter to receive,
Free, and unmerited, so fair a boon,
Than, with self-flatt'ry, dream one might perchance
Successfully have claim'd it. Gaze with joy!
So vast, so boundless, all before thee lies!
And youth, with hope inspir'd, allures thee on
Towards the future's unknown, sunny realms!
My bosom, heaven! propitious seasons smile
Once more with genial influence on this plant!
It springeth heavenward, and shooteth out
A thousand branches that unfold in bloom.
O may it bring forth fruit,—ambrosial fruit!
And may a hand belov'd the golden spoil
Cull, from its verdant and luxuriant boughs!

SCENE III.

TASSO, ANTONIO.

TASSO.

Gladly I welcome thee, it seems indeed
As though I saw thee for the first time now!
Ne'er was arrival more auspicious. Welcome!
I know thee now, and all thy varied worth,
Promptly I offer thee my heart and hand,
And trust that thou wilt not despise my love.

ANTONIO.

Freely thou offerest a precious gift;
Its worth I duly estimate, and hence
Would pause awhile before accepting it.

I know not yet if I can render thee
A full equivalent. Not willingly
Would I o'erhasty or unthankful seem;
Let then my sober caution serve for both.

TASSO.

What man would censure caution? Every step
Of life doth prove that 'tis most requisite;
Yet nobler is it, when the soul reveals,
Where we, with prudent foresight, may dispense.

ANTONIO.

The heart of each be here his oracle,
Since each his error must himself atone.

TASSO.

So let it be! My duty I've perform'd,
It is the Princess' wish we should be friends,
Her words I honour'd and thy friendship sought.
I wish'd not to hold back, Antonio,
But I will never be importunate.
Time and more near acquaintance may induce thee
To give a warmer welcome to the gift,
Which now thou dost reject, almost with scorn.

ANTONIO.

Oft is the moderate man named cold by those
Who think themselves more warm than other men,
Because a transient glow comes over them.

TASSO.

Thou blamest what I blame,—what I avoid.
Young as I am I ever must prefer
Unshaken constancy to vehemence.

ANTONIO.

Most wisely said! Keep ever in this mind.

TASSO.

Thou'rt authoris'd to counsel and to warn,
For, like a faithful, time-approved friend,
Experience holds her station at thy side.

But trust me, Sir, the meditative heart
Attends the warning of each day and hour,
And practises in secret every virtue,
Which in thy rigour thou wouldst teach anew.

ANTONIO.

'Twere well to be thus occupied with self,
If it were only profitable too.
His inmost nature no man learns to know
By introspection; still he rates himself,
Sometimes too low, but oft, alas! too high.
Self-knowledge comes from knowing other men;
'Tis life reveals to each his genuine worth.

TASSO.

I listen with applause and reverence.

ANTONIO.

Yet to my words I know thou dost attach
A meaning wholly foreign to my thought.

TASSO.

Proceeding thus, we ne'er shall draw more near.
It is not prudent, 'tis not well, to meet
With purpos'd misconception any man,
Let him be who he may! The Princess' word
I scarcely needed;—I have read thy soul:
Good thou dost purpose and accomplish too.
Thine own immediate fate concerns thee not;
Thou think'st of others, others thou dost aid,
And on life's sea, vexed by each passing gale,
Thou hold'st a heart unmov'd. I view thee thus;
What then were I, did I not draw tow'rd thee?
Did I not even keenly seek a share
Of the lock'd treasure which thy bosom guards?
Open thine heart to me, thou'lt not repent;
Know me, and I sure am thou'lt be my friend;
Of such a friend I long have felt the need.
My inexperience, my ungovern'd youth
Cause me no shame; for still around my brow
The future's golden clouds in brightness rest.

O! to thy bosom take me, noble man ;
Into the wise, the temperate use of life
Initiate my rash, my unfledg'd youth.

ANTONIO.

Thou in a single moment wouldst demand
What time and circumspection only yield.

TASSO.

In one brief moment love has power to give
What anxious toil wins not in lengthen'd years.
I do not ask it from thee, I demand.
I summon thee in Virtue's sacred name,
For she is zealous to unite the good ;
And shall I name to thee another name?
The Princess, she doth wish it.—Leonora.
Me she would lead to thee, and thee to me.
O let us meet her wish with kindred hearts!
United let us to the goddess haste,
To offer her our service, our whole souls,
Leagued to achieve for her the noblest aims.
Yet once again!—Here is my hand! Give thine!
I do entreat, hold thyself back no longer,
O noble man, and grudge me not the joy,
The good man's fairest joy, without reserve,
Freely to yield himself to nobler men!

ANTONIO.

Thou goest with full sail! It would appear
Thou'rt wont to conquer, everywhere to find
The pathways spacious and the portals wide.
I grudge thee not or merit or success,—
Only I see indeed, too plainly see,
We from each other stand too far apart.

TASSO.

It may be so in years and time-tried worth ;—
In courage and goodwill I yield to none.

ANTONIO.

Goodwill doth oft prove deedless ; courage still

Pictures the goal less distant than it is.
His brow alone is crown'd who reaches it,
And oft a worthier must forego the crown.
Yet wreaths there are of very different fashion;
Light, worthless wreaths, which, idly strolling on,
The loiterer oft without the toil obtains.

TASSO.

What a divinity to one accords,
And from another sternly doth withhold,
Is not obtain'd by each man as he lists.

ANTONIO.

To Fortune before other Gods ascribe it;
I'll hear thee gladly, for her choice is blind.

TASSO.

Impartial Justice also wears a band,
And to each bright illusion shuts her eyes.

ANTONIO.

Fortune 'tis for the fortunate to praise!
Let him ascribe to her a hundred eyes
To scan desert,—stern judgment, and wise choice.
Call her Minerva, call her what he will,
He holds as just reward her golden gifts,
Chance ornament as symbol of desert.

TASSO.

Thou need'st not speak more plainly. 'Tis enough!
Deeply I see into thine inmost heart,
And know thee now for life. O would that so
My Princess knew thee also! Lavish not
The arrows of thine eyes and of thy tongue!
In vain thou aimest at the fadeless wreath
Entwin'd around my brow. First be so great
As not to envy me the laurel wreath!
And then perchance thou mayst dispute the prize.
I deem it sacred, yea, the highest good;
Yet only show me him, who hath attain'd
That after which I strive; show me the hero,

Of whom on history's ample page I read;
The poet place before me, who himself
With Homer or with Virgil may compare;
Ay, what is more, let me behold the man
Who hath deserved threefold this recompense,
And yet can wear the laurel round his brow,
With modesty thrice greater than my own,—
Then at the feet of the divinity
Who thus endow'd me, thou should'st see me kneel,
Nor would I stand erect, till from my brow,
She had to his the ornament transferr'd.

ANTONIO.

Till then thou'rt doubtless worthy of the crown.

TASSO.

Let me be justly weigh'd: I shun it not;
But your contempt I never have deserv'd.
The wreath consider'd by my Prince my due,
Which for my brow my Princess' hand entwin'd,
None shall dispute with me, and none asperse!

ANTONIO.

This haughty tone, methinks, becomes thee not,
Nor this rash glow, unseemly in this place.

TASSO.

The tone thou takest here, becomes me too.
Say, from these precincts is the truth exil'd?
Within the palace is free thought imprison'd?
Here must the noble spirit be oppress'd?
This is nobility's appropriate seat,
The soul's nobility! and may she not
In presence of earth's mighty ones, rejoice?
She may and shall. Nobles draw near the Prince
In virtue of the rank their sires bequeath'd;
Why should not genius then, which partial Nature
Grants, like a glorious ancestry, to few?
Here littleness alone should feel confus'd,
And envy shun to manifest its shame:

As no insidious spider should attach
Its noisome fabric to these marble walls.

ANTONIO.

Thyself dost show that my contempt is just!
The impetuous youth, forsooth, would seize by force
The confidence and friendship of the man!
Rude as thou art, dost think thyself of worth?

TASSO.

I'd rather be what thou esteamest rude,
Than what I must myself esteem ignoble.

ANTONIO.

Thou'rt still so young that wholesome chastisement
May tutor thee to hold a better course.

TASSO.

Not young enough to bow to idols down,
Yet old enough to conquer scorn with scorn.

ANTONIO.

From contests of the lip and of the lyre,
A conquering hero, thou mayst issue forth.

TASSO.

It were presumptuous to extol my arm;
As yet 'tis deedless; still I'll trust to it.

ANTONIO.

Thou trustest to forbearance, which too long
Hath spoil'd thee in thine insolent career.

TASSO.

That I am grown to manhood, now I feel:
It would have been the farthest from my wish
To try with thee the doubtful game of arms:
But thou dost stir the inward fire; my blood,
My inmost marrow boils; the fierce desire
Of vengeance seethes and foams within my breast.
Art thou the man thou boast'st thyself,—then stand.

ANTONIO.

Thou know'st as little who, as where thou art.

TASSO.

No fane so sacred as to shield contempt.
Thou dost blaspheme, thou dost profane this spot,
Not I, who fairest offerings,—confidence,
Respect, and love, for thine acceptance brought.
Thy spirit desecrates this paradise;
And thy injurious words this sacred hall;
Not the indignant heaving of my breast,
Which boils to wipe away the slightest stain.

ANTONIO.

What a high spirit in a narrow breast!

TASSO.

Here there is space to vent the bosom's rage.

ANTONIO.

The rabble also vent their rage in words.

TASSO.

Art thou of noble blood as I am, draw.

ANTONIO.

I am, but I remember where I stand.

TASSO.

Come then below, where weapons may avail.

ANTONIO.

Thou shouldst not challenge, therefore I'll not follow.

TASSO.

To cowards welcome such impediments.

ANTONIO.

The coward only threats where he's secure.

TASSO.

With joy would I relinquish this defence.

ANTONIO.

Degrade thyself : degrade the place thou canst not.

TASSO.

The place forgive me that I suffer'd it !

(He draws his sword.)

Or draw or follow, if, as now I hate,
I'm not to scorn thee to eternity !

SCENE IV.

TASSO, ANTONIO, ALPHONSO.

ALPHONSO.

In what unlook'd for strife I find you both ?

ANTONIO.

Calm and unmov'd, O Prince, thou find'st me here,
Before a man whom passion's rage hath seized.

TASSO.

As a divinity I worship thee
That thus thou tam'st me with one warning look.

ALPHONSO.

Relate, Antonio, Tasso, tell me straight ;—
Say, why doth discord thus invade my house ?
How hath it seized you both, and hurried you
Confus'd and reeling, from the beaten track
Of decency and law ? I stand amazed.

TASSO.

I feel it, thou dost know nor him, nor me.
This man, reputed temperate and wise,
Hath tow'rds me, like a rude, ill-manner'd churl,
Behav'd himself with spiteful insolence.
I sought him trustfully, he thrust me back ;
With constancy I press'd myself on him,
And still, with growing bitterness imbued,
He rested not till he had turn'd to gall

My blood's pure current. Pardon! Thou, my Prince,
Hast found me here, possess'd with furious rage.
If guilty, to this man the guilt is due;
With violence he fann'd the fiery glow
Which, seizing me, hath injur'd both of us.

ANTONIO.

Poetic frenzy hurried him away!
Thou hast, O Prince, address'd thyself to me,
Hast question'd me: be it to me allow'd
After this rapid orator to speak.

TASSO.

Oh, yes, repeat again each several word;
And if before this judge thou canst recall
Each syllable, each look,—then dare to do so!
Disgrace thyself a second time, and bear
Witness against thyself! I'll not disown
A single pulse-throb, nor a single breath.

ANTONIO.

If thou hast somewhat more to say, proceed;
If not, forbear, and interrupt me not.
Whether at first this fiery youth or I
Began this quarrel, whether he or I
Must bear the blame, is a wide question, Prince,
Which stands apart, and need not be discuss'd.

TASSO.

How so? The primal question seems to me,
Which of the two is right and which is wrong.

ANTONIO.

Not so precisely, as th' ungoverned mind
Might first suppose.

ALPHONSO.

Antonio!

ANTONIO.

Gracious Prince!
Thy hint I honour; but let him forbear:

When I have spoken, he may then proceed ;
Thy voice must then decide. I've but to say,
I can no longer with this man contend ;
Can nor accuse him, nor defend myself,
Nor give the satisfaction he desires ;
For as he stands, he is no longer free.
There hangeth over him a heavy law,
Which, at the most, thy favour may relax.
Here hath he dared to threat, to challenge me,
Scarce in thy presence, sheath'd his naked sword ;
And if between us, Prince, thou hadst not stepp'd,
Obnoxious to reproof I now had stood,
Before thy sight, the partner of his fault.

ALPHONSO (*to TASSO*).

Thou hast not acted well.

TASSO.

Mine own heart, Prince,
And surely thine, doth speak me wholly free.
Yes, true it is, I threaten'd, challenged, drew ;—
But how maliciously his guileful tongue,
With words well chosen, pierc'd me to the quick ;
How sharp and rapidly his biting tooth
The subtle venom in my blood infus'd ;
How more and more the fever he inflam'd—
Thou thinkest not ! cold and unmov'd himself,
He to the highest pitch excited me.
Thou know'st him not, and thou wilt never know him ?
Warmly I tender'd him the fairest friendship ;
Down at my feet he flung the proffer'd gift ;
And had my spirit not with anger glow'd,
Of thy fair service and thy princely grace
I were for aye unworthy. If the law
I have forgotten, and this place, forgive !
The spot exists not where I dare be base,
Nor yet where I debasement dare endure.
But if this heart in any place be false,
Or to itself or thee,—condemn, reject,—
And let me ne'er again behold thy face.

ANTONIO.

How easily the youth bears heavy loads,
And shaketh misdemeanours off like dust!
It were indeed a marvel, knew I not
Of magic poesy the wondrous power,
Which loveth still with the impossible
In frolic mood to sport. I almost doubt
Whether to thee, and to thy ministers,
This deed will seem so insignificant.
For Majesty extends its shield o'er all
Who draw near its inviolate abode,
And bow before it as a deity;
As at the altar's consecrated foot,
So on its sacred threshold rage subsides;
No sword there gleams, no threat'ning word resounds,
E'en injur'd innocence seeks no revenge.
The common earth affordeth ample scope
For bitter hate, and rage implacable.
There will no coward threat, no true man flee;
Thy ancestors, on sure foundations bas'd
These walls, fit shelter for their dignity;
And, with wise forecast, hedg'd the palace round
With fearful penalties. Of all transgressors,
Exile, confinement, death, the certain doom.
Respect of persons was not, nor did mercy
The arm of justice venture to restrain.
The boldest culprit felt himself o'erawed.
And now, after a lengthen'd reign of peace,
We must behold unlicens'd rage invade
The realm of sacred order. Judge, O Prince,
And punish! for unguarded by the law,
Unshielded by his Sov'reign, who will dare
To keep the narrow path that duty bounds.

ALPHONSO.

More than your words, or aught that ye could say,
My own impartial feelings let me heed.
If that your duty ye had both fulfill'd,
I should not have this judgment to pronounce;
For here the right and wrong are near allied.

If that Antonio hath offended thee
Due satisfaction he must doubtless give,
In such a sort as thou shalt choose to ask.
I gladly would be chosen arbiter.

(To TASSO.)

Meanwhile thy misdemeanour subjects thee
To brief confinement, Tasso. I forgive thee,
And therefore, for thy sake, relax the law.
Now leave us, and within thy chamber bide,
Thyself thy sole companion, thy sole guard.

TASSO.

Is this, then, thy judicial sentence, Prince?

ANTONIO.

Discern'st thou not a father's lenity?

TASSO (to ANTONIO).

With thee, henceforth, I have no more to say.
(To ALPHONSO.)

Thine earnest word, O Prince, delivers me,
A freeman, to captivity. So be it!
Thou deem'st it right. Thy sacred word I hear
And counsel silence to mine inmost heart.
It seems so strange, so strange,—myself and thee,
This sacred spot, I scarce can recognize.
Yet him I know full well.—O, there is much
I might and ought to say, yet I submit.
My lips are mute. Was it indeed a crime?
At least, they treat me as a criminal.
Howe'er my heart rebel, I'm captive now.

ALPHONSO.

Thou tak'st it, Tasso, more to heart than I.

TASSO.

To me it still is inconceivable;
And yet not so, I am no child. Methinks
I should be able to unravel it.
A sudden light breaks in upon my soul;—
As suddenly it leaves me in the dark;—

I only hear my sentence and submit.
These are, indeed, superfluous, idle words!
Henceforth inure thy spirit to obey.
Weak mortal! To forget where thou didst stand!
Thou didst forget how high the abode of gods,
And now art stagger'd by the sudden fall.
Promptly obey, for it becomes a man
Each painful duty to perform with joy.
Take back the sword thou gavest me, what time
The cardinal I followed into France.
Though not with glory, not with shame I wore it,—
No, not to-day. The bright auspicious gift,
With heart sore troubled, I relinquish now.

ALPHONSO.

Thou know'st not, Tasso, how I feel tow'rds thee.

TASSO.

My lot is to obey, and not to think!
And destiny, alas! demands from me
Renunciation of this precious gift.
Ill doth a crown become a captive's brow.
I from my head myself remove the wreath
Which seem'd accorded for eternity.
Too early was the dearest bliss bestow'd,
And is, alas, as if I had been boastful,
Too early ta'en away.
Thou takest back what none beside could take,
And what no God a second time accords.
We mortals are most wonderfully tried;
We could not bear it, were we not endow'd,
By Nature, with a kindly levity.
Calmly necessity doth tutor us
With priceless treasures lavishly to sport;
Our hands we open of our own free will—
The prize escapes us, ne'er to be recalled.
A tear doth mingle with this parting kiss,
Devoting thee to mutability!
This tender sign of weakness may be pardon'd!
Who would not weep when what was deem'd immortal
Yields to destruction's power! Now to this sword

(Alas, it won thee not,) ally thyself,
And round it twin'd, as on a hero's bier
Reposing, mark the grave where buried lie
My short-liv'd happiness, my wither'd hopes!
Here at thy feet, O Prince, I lay them down;
For who is justly arm'd if thou art wroth?
Who justly crown'd, on whom thy brow is bent?
I go a captive, and await my doom. [Exit.
(On a sign from the Prince, a Page raises the sword and
wreath and bears them away.)

SCENE V.

ALPHONSO, ANTONIO.

ANTONIO.

Whither doth frenzied fancy lead the boy?
And in what colours doth he picture forth
His high desert and glorious destiny?
Rash, inexperience'd, youth esteems itself
A chosen instrument, and arrogates
Unbounded licence. He has been chastis'd,
And chastisement is profit to the boy,
For which the man will render cordial thanks.

ALPHONSO.

He is chastis'd, too painfully I fear.

ANTONIO.

Art thou dispos'd to practise lenity,
Restore to him his liberty, O Prince,
And then the sword may arbitrate our strife.

ALPHONSO.

So be it, if the public voice demands.
But tell me, how didst thou provoke his ire?

ANTONIO.

In sooth, I scarce can say how it befell.

As man, I may perchance have wounded him.
As nobleman, I gave him no offence.
And in the very tempest of his rage,
No word unseemly hath escaped this lip.

ALPHONSO.

Of such a sort your quarrel seem'd to me ;
And your own word confirms me in my thought.
When men dispute we justly may esteem
The wiser the offender. Thou with Tasso
Should'st not contend, but rather guide his steps,
It would become thee more. 'Tis not too late.
The sword's decision is not call'd for here.
So long as I am bless'd with peace abroad,
So long would I enjoy it in my house.
Restore tranquillity, thou canst with ease.
Leonora Sanvitale may at first
Attempt to soothe him with her honeyed lip ;
Then go thou to him ; in my name restore
His liberty ; with true and noble words
Endeavour to obtain his confidence.
Accomplish this with all the speed thou canst ;
As a kind friend and father speak with him.
Peace I would know restor'd ere I depart ;
All if thou wilt—is possible to thee.
We gladly will remain another hour,
Then leave it to the ladies' gentle tact
To consummate the work commenc'd by thee.
So when we come again, the last faint trace
Of this rash quarrel will be quite effac'd.
It seems thy talents will not rust, Antonio !
Scarcely hast thou concluded one affair
And on thy first return thou seek'st another.
In this new mission may success be thine !

ANTONIO.

I am asham'd ; my error in thy words
As in the clearest mirror, I discern !
How easy to obey a noble prince
Who doth convince us, while he doth command.

ACT III.

SCENE I.

PRINCESS (*alone*).

Where tarries Leonora? Anxious fear,
Augmenting every moment, agitates
My inmost heart. Scarce know I what befell;
Which party is to blame I scarcely know.
Oh, that she would return! I would not yet
Speak with my brother, with Antonio,
Till I am more compos'd, till I have heard
How matters stand, and what may be the issue

SCENE II.

PRINCESS, LEONORA.

PRINCESS.

What tidings, Leonora? Tell me all:
How stands it with our friends? Say, what befell?

LEONORA.

More than I knew before I have not learn'd.
Contention rose between them; Tasso drew;
Thy brother parted them: yet it would seem
That it was Tasso who began the fray.
Antonio is at large, and with his Prince
Converses freely. Tasso, in his chamber,
Abides meanwhile, a captive and alone.

PRINCESS.

Doubtless Antonio irritated him,
And met with cold disdain the high-ton'd youth.

LEONORA.

I do believe it, when he join'd us first
A cloud already brooded o'er his brow.

PRINCESS.

Alas that we so often disregard
The pure and silent warnings of the heart!
Softly a God doth whisper in our breast,
Softly, yet audibly, doth counsel us,
Both what we ought to seek and what to shun.
This morn Antonio hath appear'd to me
E'en more abrupt than ever,—more reserv'd.
When at his side I saw our youthful bard,
My spirit warn'd me. Only mark of each
The outward aspect;—countenance and tone,
Look, gesture, bearing! Everything oppos'd;
Affection they can never interchange.
Yet Hope persuaded me, the flatterer:
They both are sensible, she fondly urg'd,
Both noble, gently nurtur'd, and thy friends.
What bond more sure than that which links the good?
I urg'd the youth; with what devoted zeal,
How ardently he gave himself to me!
Would I had spoken to Antonio then!
But I delay'd: So recent his return,
That I felt shy, at once and urgently,
To recommend the youth to his regard;
On custom I relied and courtesy,
And on the common usage of the world,
E'en between foes which smoothly intervenes.
I dreaded not from the experienc'd man,
The rash impetuosity of youth.
The ill seem'd distant, now, alas, 'tis here.
Oh give me counsel! What is to be done?

LEONORA.

Thy words, my Princess, show that thou dost feel
How hard it is to counsel. 'Tis not here
Between congenial minds a misconception;
A word, if needful an appeal to arms,
Peace in such case might happily restore.
Two men they are, who therefore are opposed,
I've felt it long, because by Nature cast
In moulds so opposite, that she the twain

Could never weld into a single man.
And were they to consult their common weal,
A league of closest friendship they would form,
Then as one man their path they would pursue,
With power, and joy, and happiness through life.
I hop'd it once, I now perceive in vain.
To-day's contention, whatsoe'er the cause,
Might be appeas'd, but this assures us not,
Or for the morrow, or for future time.
Methinks 'twere best, that Tasso for awhile
Should journey hence; to Rome he might repair,
To Florence also bend forthwith his course;
A few weeks later I should meet him there,
And as a friend could work upon his mind;
Thou couldest here meanwhile Antonio,
Who has become almost a stranger to us,
Once more within thy friendly circle bring;
And thus benignant time, that grants so much,
Might grant, perchance, what seems impossible.

PRINCESS.

A happiness will thus, my friend, be thine,
Which I must needs forego; say, is that right?

LEONORA.

Thou only wouldst forego what thou thyself
As things at present stand, couldst not enjoy.

PRINCESS.

So calmly shall I banish hence a friend?

LEONORA.

Rather retain, whom thou dost seem to banish.

PRINCESS.

The duke will ne'er consent to part with him.

LEONORA.

When he shall see as we do, he will yield.

PRINCESS.

'Tis painful in one's friend to doom oneself.

LEONORA.

Yet with thy friend, thou'lt also save thyself.

PRINCESS.

I cannot give my voice that this shall be.

LEONORA.

An evil still more grievous then expect.

PRINCESS.

Thou giv'st me pain,—uncertain thy success.

LEONORA.

Ere long we shall discover, who doth err.

PRINCESS.

Well, if it needs must be so, say no more.

LEONORA.

He conquers grief, who firmly can resolve.

PRINCESS.

Resolv'd I am not; nathless let it be,
If he for long doth not absent himself.
And let us, Leonora, care for him,
That he may never be oppress'd by want,
But that the duke, e'en in a distant land,
May graciously assign him maintenance.
Speak with Antonio; with my brother he
Can much accomplish, and will not remember
The recent strife, against our friend or us.

LEONORA.

Princess, a word from thee would more avail.

PRINCESS.

I cannot, well thou knowest, Leonora,
Solicit favours for myself and friends,

As my dear sister of Urbino can.
 A calm, secluded life I'm fain to lead,
 And from my brother gratefully accept,
 Whate'er his princely bounty freely grants.
 For this reluctance once I blam'd myself;
 I've conquer'd now, and blame myself no more.
 A friend full oft would censure me, and say,
 Unselfish art thou, and unselfishness
 Is good, but thou dost carry it so far,
 That even the requirements of a friend
 Thou canst not rightly feel. I let it pass,
 And even this reproach must also bear.
 It doth the more rejoice me, that I now
 Can be in truth of service to our friend;
 My mother's heritage descends to me,
 And to his need I'll gladly minister.

LEONORA.

Princess, I too can show myself his friend.
 In truth he is no thrifty manager;
 My skilful aid shall help him where he fails.

PRINCESS.

Well take him then,—if part with him I must,
 To thee before all others be he given:
 I now perceive, it will be better so.
 This sorrow also must my spirit hail
 As good and wholesome? Such my doom from youth:
 I am inur'd to it. But half we feel
 Renunciation of a precious joy,
 When we have deem'd its tenure insecure.

LEONORA.

Happy according to thy high desert
 I hope to see thee.

PRINCESS.

Leonora! Happy?
 Who then is happy?—So indeed I might
 Esteem my brother, for his constant mind
 Still with unswerving temper meets his fate;
 Yet even he ne'er reap'd as he deserv'd.

My sister of Urbino, is she happy?
With beauty gifted and a noble heart!
Childless she's doom'd to live; her younger lord
Values her highly and upbraids her not;
But happiness is stranger to their home.
Of what avail our mother's prudent skill,
Her varied knowledge and her ample mind?
Her could they shield from foreign heresy?
They took us from her: now she is no more,
And dying, left us not the soothing thought,
That reconcil'd with God, her spirit pass'd.

LEONORA.

O mark not only that which fails to each;
Consider rather what to each remains!
And Princess, what doth not remain to thee?

PRINCESS.

What doth remain to me, Leonora? Patience!
Which I have learn'd to practise from my youth.
When friends and kindred, knit in social love,
In joyous pastime wiled the hours away,
Sickness held me a captive in my chamber;
And in the sad companionship of pain,
I early learn'd the lesson;—to endure!
One pleasure cheer'd me in my solitude,
The joy of song. I commun'd with myself,
And lull'd with soothing tones, the sense of pain.
The restless longing, the unquiet wish;—
Till sorrow oft would grow to ravishment,
And sadness' self to harmony divine.
Not long, alas! this comfort was allow'd,
The leech's stern monition silenc'd me;
I was condemned to live and to endure
•E'en of this sole remaining joy bereft.

LEONORA.

Yet many friends attach'd themselves to thee,
And now thou art in health, art joyous too.

PRINCESS.

I am in health, that is, I am not sick;
And many friends I have, whose constancy
Doth cheer my heart; and ah, I had a friend——

LEONORA.

Thou hast him still.

PRINCESS.

But soon must part with him.

That moment was of deep significance
When first I saw him. Scarce was I restor'd
From many sorrows; sickness and dull pain
Were scarce subdued; with shy and timid glance
I gaz'd once more on life, once more rejoic'd
In the glad sunshine, and my kindred's love,
And hope's delicious balm inhaled anew;
Forwards I ventur'd into life to gaze,
And friendly forms saluted me from far:
Then was it, Leonora, that my sister
First introduc'd to me the youthful bard,
She led him hither, and, shall I confess?—
My heart embrac'd him, and will hold for aye.

LEONORA.

My Princess! Let it not repent thee now!
To apprehend the noble is a gain
Of which the soul can never be bereft.

PRINCESS.

The fair, the excellent we needs must fear;
'Tis like a flame, which nobly serveth us,
So long as on our household hearth it burns,
Or sheds its lustre from the friendly torch.
How lovely then! Who can dispense with it?
But if unwatch'd, it spreads destruction round,
What anguish it occasions! Leave me now,
I babble, and 'twere better to conceal
Even from thee, how weak I am and sick.

LEONORA.

The sickness of the heart doth soonest yield
To tender plaints, and soothing confidence.

PRINCESS.

If in confiding love a cure be found,
I'm whole, so strong my confidence in thee.
Alas! my friend, I am indeed resolv'd;
Let him depart! But ah! I feel already
The long protracted anguish of the day
When I must all forego that glads me now.
His beauteous form, transfigur'd in my dream,
The morning sun will dissipate no more;
No more the blissful hope of seeing him,
With joyous longing, fill my waking sense;
Nor to discover him, my timid glance
Search wistfully our garden's dewy shade.
How sweetly was the tender hope fulfill'd
To spend each eve in intercourse with him!
How, while conversing, the desire increas'd,
To know each other ever more and more;
And still our souls, in sweet communion join'd,
Were daily tun'd to purer harmonies.
What twilight-gloom now falls around my path!
The gorgeous sun, the genial light of day,
Of this fair world the splendours manifold,
Shorn of their lustre, are envelop'd all,
In the dark mist, which now environs me.
In bygone times, each day compris'd a life;
Hush'd was each care, mute each foreboding voice.
And happily embark'd, we drifted on
Without a rudder, o'er life's lucid wave.
Now, in the darkness of the present hour,
Futurity's vague terrors seize my soul.

LEONORA.

The future will restore to thee thy friend;
And bring to thee new happiness, new joy.

PRINCESS.

What I possess, that would I gladly hold;
Change may divert the mind, but profits not.
With youthful longing I have never join'd
The motley throng who strive from fortune's urn
To snatch an object for their craving hearts.
I honour'd him, and could not choose but love him,
For that with him my life was life indeed,
Filled with a joy I never knew before.
At first I whisper'd to my heart, beware!
Shrinking I shunn'd, yet ever drew more near.
So gently lur'd, so cruelly chastis'd!
A pure substantial blessing glides away,
And for the joy that filled my yearning heart,
Some demon substitutes a kindred pain.

LEONORA.

If friendship's soothing words console thee not,
This beauteous world's calm power, and healing time,
Will imperceptibly restore thy heart.

PRINCESS.

Ay, beauteous is the world, and many a joy
Floats through its wide dominion here and there.
Alas! That ever, by a single step,
As we advance, it seemeth to retreat,
Our yearning souls along the path of life
Thus step by step alluring to the grave!
To mortal man so seldom is it given
To find what seem'd his heav'n-appointed bliss;
Alas, so seldom he retains the good
Which, in auspicious hour, his hand had grasp'd;
The treasure to our heart that came unsought
Doth tear itself away, and we ourselves
Yield that which once with eagerness we seiz'd.
There is a bliss, but ah! we know it not;
We know it, but we know not how to prize.

SCENE III.

LEONORA (*alone*).

The good and noble heart my pity moves;
How sad a lot attends her lofty rank!
Alas she loses,—thinkest thou to win?
Is his departure hence so requisite?
Or dost thou urge it for thyself alone,—
To make the heart and lofty genius thine,
Which now thou sharest,—and unequally?
Is't honest so to act? What lack'st thou yet?
Art thou not rich enough? Husband and son,
Possessions, beauty, rank—all these thou hast,
And him wouldst have beside? What! Lov'st thou him?
How comes it else that thou canst not endure
To live without him? This thou dar'st confess!
How charming is it in his mind's clear depths
Oneself to mirror. Doth not every joy
Seem doubly great and noble, when his song
Wafts us aloft as on the clouds of heaven?
Then first thy lot is worthy to be envied!
Not only hast thou what the many crave,
But each one knoweth what thou art and hast!
Thy fatherland doth proudly speak thy name;
This is the pinnacle of earthly bliss.
Is Laura's then the only favour'd name
That aye from gentle lips shall sweetly flow?
Is it Petrarca's privilege alone,
To deify an unknown beauty's charms?
Who is there that with Tasso can compare?
As now the world exalts him, future time
With honour due shall magnify his name.
What rapture, in the golden prime of life
To feel his presence, and with him to near,
With airy tread, the future's hidden realm!
Thus should old age and time their influence lose,
And powerless be the voice of rumour bold,
Whose breath controls the billows of applause.
All that is transient in his song survives;
Still art thou young, still happy, when the round

Of changeful time shall long have borne thee on.
Him thou must have, yet takest naught from her.
For her affection to the gifted man
Doth take the hue her other passions wear ;
Pale as the tranquil moon, whose feeble rays
Dimly illumine the night-wanderer's path ;
They gleam, but warm not, and diffuse around
No blissful rapture, no keen sense of joy.
If she but know him happy, though afar,
She will rejoice, as when she saw him daily.
And then, 'tis not my purpose from this court,
From her, to banish both myself and friend.
I will return, will bring him here again.
So let it be!—My rugged friend draws near ;
We soon shall see if we have power to tame him.

SCENE IV.

LEONORA, ANTONIO.

LEONORA.

War and not peace thou bringest : it would seem
As cam'st thou from a battle, from a camp,
Where violence bears sway, and force decides,
And not from Rome, where solemn policy
Uplifts the hand to bless a prostrate world,
Which she beholds obedient at her feet.

ANTONIO.

I must admit the censure, my fair friend,
But my apology lies close at hand ;
'Tis dangerous to be compell'd so long
To wear the show of prudence and restraint.
Still at our side an evil genius lurks,
And with stern voice, demands from time to time
A sacrifice, which I alas to-day
Have offered, to the peril of my friends.

LEONORA.

Thou hast so long with strangers been concern'd,
And to their humours hast conform'd thine own,

That once more with thy friends, thou dost their aims
Mistake, and as with strangers dost contend.

ANTONIO.

Herein, beloved friend, the danger lies!
With strangers we are ever on our guard,
Still are we aiming with observance due,
To win their favour, which may profit us;
But with our friends, we throw off all restraint;
Reposing in their love, we give the rein
To peevish humour; passion uncontroll'd
Doth break its bounds; and those we hold most dear
Are thus amongst the first whom we offend.

LEONORA.

In this calm utterance of a thoughtful mind
I gladly recognise my friend again.

ANTONIO.

Yes, it has much annoy'd me, I confess—
That I to-day so far forgot myself.
But yet admit, that when a valiant man
From irksome labour comes, with heated brow,
Thinking to rest himself for further toil,
In the cool eve beneath the long'd-for shade,
And finds it, in its length and breadth, possess'd
Already, by some idler, he may well
Feel something human stirring in his breast?

LEONORA.

If he is truly human, then, methinks,
He gladly will partake the shade with one
Who lightens toil, and cheers the hour of rest.
With sweet discourse and soothing melodies.
Ample, my friend, the tree that casts the shade,
Nor either needs the other dispossess.

ANTONIO.

We will not bandy similes, fair friend.
Full many a treasure doth the world contain,
Which we to others yield and with them share;

But there exists one prize, which we resign
With willing hearts to high desert alone;
Another, that without a secret grudge,
We share not even with the highest worth—
And wouldst thou touching these two treasures ask,
They are the laurel, and fair woman's smile.

LEONORA.

How! Hath yon chaplet round our stripling's brow
Given umbrage to the grave, experienc'd man?
Say, for his toil divine, his lofty verse,
Couldst thou thyself a juster meed select?
A ministration in itself divine,
That floateth in the air in tuneful tones,
Evoking airy forms to charm our souls—
Such ministration, in expressive form,
Or graceful symbol, finds its fit reward.
As doth the bard scarce deign to touch the earth,
So doth the laurel lightly touch his brow.
His worshippers, with barren homage, bring
As tribute meet, a fruitless branch, that thus
They may with ease acquit them of their debt.
Thou dost not grudge the martyr's effigy,
The golden radiance round the naked head:
And, certes, where it rests, the laurel crown
Is more a sign of sorrow than of joy.

ANTONIO.

How, Leonora! Would thy lovely lips
Teach me to scorn the world's poor vanities?

LEONORA.

There is no need, my friend, to tutor thee
To prize each good according to its worth.
Yet it would seem, that e'en like common men,
The sage philosopher, from time to time,
Needs that the treasures he is blest withal,
In their true light before him be display'd.
Thou, noble man, wilt not assert thy claim
To a mere empty phantom of renown.
The service that doth bind thy Prince to thee,

By means of which thou dost attach thy friends,
Is true, is living service, hence the meed
Which doth reward it, must be living too.
Thy laurel is thy sovereign's confidence.
Which, like a cherish'd burden, gracefully,
Reposes on thy shoulders,—thy renown,
Thy crown of glory, is the general trust.

ANTONIO.

Thou speakest not of woman's smile, that, surely,
Thou wilt not tell me is superfluous.

LEONORA.

As people take it. Thou dost lack it not:
And lighter far, were ye deprived of it,
To thee would be the loss than to our friend.
For say, a woman were in thy behalf
To task her skill, and in her fashion strive
To care for thee, dost think she would succeed?
With thee security and order dwell;
And as for others, for thyself thou carest;
Thou dost possess what friendship fain would give;
Whilst in our province he requires our aid.
A thousand things he needs, which to supply,
Is to a woman no unwelcome task.
The fine-spun linen, the embroider'd vest,
He weareth gladly, and endureth not,
Upon his person, aught of texture rude,
Such as befits the menial. For with him
All must be rich and noble, fair and good;
And yet all this to win, he lacks the skill;
Nor even when possess'd, can he retain;
Improvident, he's still in want of gold;
Nor from a journey e'er returneth home,
But a third portion of his goods is lost.
His valet plunders him, and thus, Antonio,
The whole year round one has to care for him.

ANTONIO.

And these same cares endear him more and more.
Much-favour'd youth, to whom his very faults

As virtues count, to whom it is allow'd
As man to play the boy, and who forsooth
May proudly boast his charming weaknesses!
Thou must forgive me, my fair friend, if here
Some little touch of bitterness I feel.
Thou say'st not all, say'st not how he presumes,
And proves himself far shrewder than he seems.
He boasts two tender flames! The knots of love,
As fancy prompts him, he doth bind and loose,
And wins with such devices two such hearts!
Is't credible?

LEONORA.

Well! Well! This only proves
That 'tis but friendship that inspires our hearts.
And e'en if we return'd him love for love,
Should we not well reward his noble heart,
Who, self-oblivious, dreams his life away
In lovely visions to enchant his friends?

ANTONIO.

Go on! Go on! Spoil him yet more and more,
Account his selfish vanity for love;
Offend all other friends, with honest zeal
Devoted to your service; to his pride
Pay voluntary tribute; quite destroy
The beauteous sphere of social confidence!

LEONORA.

We are not quite so partial as thou think'st,
In many cases we exhort our friend.
We wish to mould his mind, that he may know
More happiness himself, and be a source
Of purer joy to others. What in him
Doth merit blame, is not conceal'd from us.

ANTONIO.

Yet much that's blamable in him ye praise.
I've known him long, so easy 'tis to know him,
Too proud he is to wear the least disguise.
We see him now retire into himself,
As if the world were rounded in his breast;

Lost in the working of that inner world,
The outward universe he casts aside,
And his rapt spirit, self-included, rests.
Anon, as when a spark doth fire a mine,
Upon a touch of sorrow or of joy,
Anger or whim, he breaks impetuous forth.
Now he must compass all things, all retain,
All his caprices must be realis'd;
What should have ripen'd slowly through long years,
Must, in a moment, reach maturity;
And obstacles, which years of patient toil
Could scarce remove, be levell'd in a trice.
He from himself th' impossible demands,
That he from others may demand it too;
Th' extremest limits of existing things
His soul would hold in contiguity,
This one man in a million scarce achieves,
And he is not that man; at length he falls,
No whit the better, back into himself.

LEONORA.

Others he injures not, himself he injures.

ANTONIO.

Yet others he doth outrage grievously.
Canst thou deny that in his passion's height,
Which o'er his spirit oft usurps control,
The Prince and e'en the Princess he contemns,
And dares at whom he may to hurl abuse?
True, for a moment only it endures;
But then the moment quickly comes again.
His tongue, as little as his breast, he rules.

LEONORA.

To me, indeed, it seems advisable,
That he should leave Ferrara for awhile;—
Himself would benefit, and others too.

ANTONIO.

Perchance,—perchance too not. But now, my friend,
It is not to be thought of. For myself,

I will not on my shoulders bear the blame.
It might appear as if I drove him hence.
I drive him not. As far as I'm concern'd,
He at the court may tarry undisturb'd ;
And if with me he will be reconcil'd,
And to my counsel if he will give heed,
We may live peaceably enough together.

LEONORA.

Now thou dost hope to work upon a mind
Which lately thou didst look upon as lost.

ANTONIO.

We always hope, and still in every case,
'Tis better far to hope than to despair ;
For who can calculate the possible ?
Our Prince esteems him ; he must stay with us ;
And if we strive to fashion him in vain,
He's not the only one we must endure.

LEONORA.

So free from passion and from prejudice
I had not thought thee ;—thy conversion's sudden.

ANTONIO.

Age must, my friend, this one advantage claim,
That, though from error it be not exempt,
Its balance it recovers speedily.
Thou didst at first essay to heal the breach
Between thy friend and me. I urge it now.
Do what thou canst to bring him to himself,
And to restore things to their wonted calm.
Myself will visit him, when I shall know,
From thee, that he is tranquil, when thou thinkest
My presence will not aggravate the evil.
But what thou dost, that do within the hour ;
Alphonso will return to town ere night ;
I must attend him there. Meanwhile, farewell.

SCENE V.

LEONORA (*alone*).

For once, dear friend, we are not of one mind,
Our separate interests go not hand in hand.
I'll use the time to compass my design,
And will endeavour to win Tasso. Quick!

ACT IV.

SCENE I. *A Chamber.*TASSO (*alone*).

Art thou awaken'd from a dream, and is
The fair delusion suddenly dissolv'd?
Thee, in fruition of the highest joy,
Hath sleep o'ermaster'd, and now holds thy soul
Tortur'd and bound with heavy fetters? Ay,
Thou art awake, and dreamest? Where the hours
That round thy head with flowery garlands play'd?
The days, when unrestrain'd thy yearning soul
Freely explor'd the heaven's o'erarching blue?
Thou'rt living still, art sensible to touch,
Feelest, yet know'st not if thou livest still.
Say, for mine own, or for another's fault,
Am I, as criminal, thus captive here?
Have I been guilty that I suffer thus?
Is not my fancied crime a merit rather?
With kindly feeling I encounter'd him,
Persuaded, by the heart's delusive hope,
He must be man who bears a mortal form;
With open arms I sped to his embrace,
And felt no human breast, but bolts and bars.
Oh, had I but with prudent forecast weigh'd,
How I most fitly could receive the man,
Who from the first inspir'd me with mistrust!
Let me, however, whatsoe'er betide,
For ever to this one assurance cling:—

'Twas she herself! She stood before my view!
She spoke to me! I hearken'd to her voice!
Her look, her tone, her words' sweet import, these,
These are for ever mine; nor time nor fate,
Nor ruthless chance can plunder me of these!
And if my spirit hath too swiftly soar'd,
If all too promptly in my breast I gave
Vent to the flame, which now consumes my heart,
So let it be,—I never can repent,
E'en though my fortune were for ever wreck'd.
To her devoted, I obey'd with joy
The hand that beckon'd me to ruin's brink.
So let it be! Thus have I prov'd myself
Deserving of the precious confidence
That cheers my soul,—ay, cheers it in this hour,
When cruel fate unlocks the sable gates
Of long-protracted woe.—Yes, now 'tis done!
For me the sun of gracious favour sets,
Never to rise again; his glance benign
The Prince withdraws, and leaves me standing here,
Abandon'd on this narrow, gloomy path.
The hateful and ill-boding feather'd throng,
Obscene attendants upon ancient night,
Swarm forth and whirl round my devoted head.
Whither, oh whither, shall I bend my steps,
To shun the loathsome brood that round me flit,
And 'scape the dread abyss that yawns before?

SCENE II.

LEONORA, TASSO.

LEONORA.

- Dear Tasso, what hath chanc'd? Hath passion's glow,
Hath thy suspicious temper urged thee thus?
How hath it happen'd? We are all amaz'd.
Where now thy gentleness, thy suavity,
Thy rapid insight, thy discernment just,
Which doth award to every man his due;
Thine even mind, which beareth, what to bear

The wise are prompt, the vain are slow, to learn;
The prudent mastery over lip and tongue?
I scarcely recognise thee now, dear friend.

TASSO.

And what if all were gone for ever gone!
If as a beggar thou shouldst meet the friend
Whom just before thou hadst deem'd opulent!
Thou speakest truth, I am no more myself.
Yet am I now as much so as I was.
It seems a riddle, yet it is not one.
The tranquil moon, that cheers thee through the night,
Whose gentle radiance, with resistless power,
Allures thine eye, thy soul, doth float by day
An insignificant and pallid cloud.
In the bright glare of daylight I am lost,
Ye know me not, I scarcely know myself.

LEONORA.

Such words, dear friend, as thou hast utter'd them,
I cannot comprehend. Explain thyself.
Say, hath that rugged man's offensive speech
So deeply wounded thee, that now thou dost
Misjudge thyself and us? Confide in me.

TASSO.

I'm not the one offended. Me thou seest
Thus punish'd here because I gave offence.
The knot of many words the sword would loose
With promptitude and ease, but I'm not free.
Thou'rt scarce aware,—nay, start not, gentle friend,—
'Tis in a prison thou dost meet me here.
Me, as a schoolboy, doth the Prince chastise.—
His right I neither can, nor will dispute.

LEONORA.

Thou seemest mov'd beyond what reason warrants.

TASSO.

Dost deem me then so weak, so much a child,
That this occurrence could o'erwhelm me thus?

Not what has happen'd wounds me to the quick,
'Tis what it doth portend, that troubles me.
Now let my foes conspire! The field is clear.

LEONORA.

Many thou holdest falsely in suspect;
Of this, dear friend, I have convinc'd myself.
Even Antonio bears thee no ill-will,
As thou presum'st. The quarrel of to-day——

TASSO.

Let that be set aside; I only view
Antonio as he was and yet remains.
Still hath his formal prudence fretted me,
His proud assumption of the master's tone.
Careless to learn whether the listener's mind
Doth not itself the better track pursue,
He tutors thee in much which thou thyself
More truly, deeply feelest; gives no heed
To what thou sayest, and perverts thy words.
Misconstrued thus, by a proud man, forsooth,
Who smiles superior from his fancied height!
I am not yet or old or wise enough
To answer meekly with a patient smile.
It could not hold, we must at last have broken;
The evil greater had it been postpon'd.
One lord I recognise, who fosters me,
Him I obey, but own no master else.
In poesy and thought I will be free,
In act the world doth limit us enough.

LEONORA.

Yet often with respect he speaks of thee.

TASSO.

Thou meanest with forbearance, prudent, subtle,
'Tis that annoys me; for he knows to use
Language so smooth and so conditional,
That seeming praise from him is actual blame,
And there is nothing so offends my soul,
As words of commendation from his lip.

LEONORA.

Thou shouldst have heard but lately how he spoke
Of thee and of the gift which bounteous nature
So largely hath conferr'd on thee. He feels
Thy genius, Tasso, and esteems thy worth.

TASSO.

Trust me, no selfish spirit can escape
The torment of base envy. Such a man
Pardons in others honour, rank, and wealth ;
For thus he argues, these thou hast thyself,
Or thou canst have them, if thou persevere,
Or if propitious fortune smile on thee.
But that which Nature can alone bestow,
Which aye remaineth inaccessible
To toil and patient effort, which nor gold,
Nor yet the sword, nor stern persistency
Hath power to wrest,—that he will ne'er forgive.
Not envy me? The pedant who aspires
To seize by force the favour of the muse?
Who, when he strings the thoughts of other bards,
Fondly presumes he is a bard himself?
The Prince's favour he would rather yield,
Though that he fain would limit to himself,
Than the rare gift which the celestial powers
Have granted to the poor, the orphan'd youth.

LEONORA.

O that thy vision were as clear as mine!
Thou read'st him wrongly, thou'rt deceiv'd in him.

TASSO.

And if I err, I err with right good will!
I count him for my most inveterate foe,
And should be inconsolable, were I
Compell'd to think of him more leniently.
'Tis foolish in all cases to be just ;
It is to wrong oneself. Are other men
Towards us so equitable? No, ah no!
Man's nature, in its narrow scope, demands

The twofold sentiment of love and hate.
Requires he not the grateful interchange
Of day and night, of wakefulness and sleep?
No, from henceforward I do hold this man
The object of my direst enmity;
And naught can snatch from me the cherish'd joy
Of thinking of him ever worse and worse.

LEONORA.

Dear friend, I see not if this feeling last,
How thou canst longer tarry at the court.
Thou know'st the just esteem in which he's held.

TASSO.

I'm fully sensible, fair friend, how long
I have already been superfluous here.

LEONORA.

That thou art not, that thou canst never be!
Thou rather knowest how both Prince and Princess
Rejoice to have thee in their company.
The sister of Urbino, comes she not,
As much for thine as for her kindred's sake?
They all esteem thee, recognise thy worth,
And each confides in thee without reserve.

TASSO.

O Leonora! Call that confidence!
Of state affairs has he one single word,
One earnest word, vouchsaf'd to speak with me?
In special cases, when he has advis'd
Both with the Princess, and with others too,
To me, though present, no appeal was made.
The cry was ever then, Antonio comes!
Consult Antonio! To Antonio write!

LEONORA.

Thanks here, methinks, were juster than complaint.
Thus in unchalleng'd freedom leaving thee,
He to thy genius fitting homage pays.

TASSO.

He lets me rest, because he deems me useless.

LEONORA.

Thou art not useless, e'en because thou restest.
Care and vexation, like a child beloved,
Thou still dost cherish, Tasso, in thy breast.
It oft has struck me, and the more I think,
The more convinc'd I feel; on this fair soil,
Where fate auspicious seem'd to plant thy lot,
Thou dost not flourish.—May I speak, my friend?
May I advise thee?—Thou shouldst hence depart.

TASSO.

Spare not thy patient, gentle leech! Extend
The draught medicinal, nor think thereon
If it is bitter.—This consider well,
Kind, prudent friend, if he can yet be cur'd!
I see it all myself, 'tis over now!
Him I indeed could pardon, he not me;
He's needful to them, I, alas! am not.
And he has prudence, I, alas! have none.
He worketh to my injury, and I
Cannot and will not counterwork. My friends
Leave things to chance, they see things otherwise,
They scarcely struggle, who should stoutly fight.
Thou think'st I should depart, I think so too;—
Then farewell, friends!—This, too, I must endure.
You're parted from me.—Oh, to me be given
The courage and the strength to part from you!

LEONORA.

Seen from a distance things show less confus'd,
That in the present serve but to perplex.
Perchance, when absent, thou wilt recognise
The love which here environs thee, wilt learn
The worth of friends, and feel how the wide world
Cannot replace those dearest to the heart.

TASSO.

I shall experience this! Alas, I've known
The world from early youth, how, pressing on,

She lightly leaves us, helpless and forlorn,
Like sun and moon and other deities.

LEONORA.

Dear friend, if thou wilt lend an ear to me,
This sad experience thou wilt not repeat.
If I may counsel thee, thou wilt at first
Repair to Florence,—there thou'lt find a friend
Will cherish thee most kindly—'tis myself!
Thither I travel soon to meet my lord,
And there is nothing would afford us, Tasso,
A richer pleasure than thy company.
I need not tell thee, for thyself dost know,
How noble is the Prince who ruleth there;
What men, what women, too, our favour'd town
Doth cherish in her bosom. Thou art silent!
Consider well my counsel, and resolve!

TASSO.

Full of sweet promise are thy words, dear friend,
And in accordance with my secret wish.
But 'tis too sudden; let me pause awhile,—
Let me consider! I will soon resolve!

LEONORA.

I leave thee now, and with the fairest hope
For thee, for us, and also for this house.
Only reflect, and weigh the matter well,
Thou scarcely wilt devise a better plan.

TASSO.

Yet one thing more, tell me, beloved friend,
How is the Princess minded towards me? Speak!
Was she displeas'd with me? Give me her words.—
Hath she severely blam'd me? Tell me all!

LEONORA.

She knows thee well, and therefore has excus'd thee

TASSO.

Say, have I lost her friendship? Flatter not.

LEONORA.

A woman's friendship is not lightly lost.

TASSO.

Without reluctance will she let me go?

LEONORA.

If 'twill promote thy welfare, certainly.

TASSO.

Shall I not lose the favour of the Prince?

LEONORA.

His nature's noble, thou may'st trust in him.

TASSO.

And shall we leave the Princess all alone?
Thou leavest her; and though perhaps not much,
I know full well that I was something to her.

LEONORA.

An absent friend is sweet society,
When of his welfare we are well assur'd.
My plan succeeds, I see thee happy now;
Thou wilt not hence depart unsatisfied.
The Prince commands;—Antonio seeks thee, Tasso.
He censures in himself the bitterness
With which he wounded thee. I do entreat,
Receive him with forbearance, when he comes.

TASSO.

I have no cause to shun the interview.

LEONORA.

And oh! dear friend, that Heaven would grant me this—
To make it clear to thee ere thou departest,
That in thy fatherland there is not one
Pursues thee, hates, or covertly molests.
Thou art deceiv'd, and as for others' pleasure
Wont art thou still to poetise, alas!
Thou in this case dost weave a cunning web

To blind thyself, the which to rend asunder,
I'll do mine utmost, that with vision clear
Thou may'st pursue life's glad career untrammell'd
Farewell! I hope for happy words ere long.

SCENE III.

TASSO (*alone*).

I must believe, forsooth, that no one hates me,—
That no one persecutes, that all the guile,
The subtle malice that environs me,
Is but the coinage of my own sick brain!
I must acknowledge that myself am wrong!
And am unjust to many, who in sooth
Deserve it not! What! This confess e'en now,
When clearly in the open face of day,
Appear their malice and my rectitude!
I ought to feel most deeply, how the Prince
To me with generous breast his grace imparts,
And in rich measure loads me with his gifts,
E'en at the time when he is weak enough,
To let his eyes be blinded by my foes,
Yea, doubtless, and his hand be fetter'd too!

His own delusion he cannot perceive,
That they deluders are, I may not prove;
And that uncheck'd he may delude himself,
And they delude him whensoever they please,
I still must hold my peace,—must yield forsooth!

And who thus counsels me? With prudent zeal,
And thoughtful kindness, who doth urge me thus?
Leonora's self, Leonora Santivale,
Considerate friend! Ha, ha, I know thee now!
O wherefore did I ever trust her words?
She was not honest, when she utter'd forth
To me her favour, and her tenderness,
With honeyed words! No, hers hath ever been
And still remains a crafty heart, she turns
With cautious, prudent step, where fortune smiles.

How often have I willingly deceiv'd
Myself in her! And yet it was in truth
But mine own vanity deluded me!
I knew her, but self-flatter'd, argued thus:—
True, she is so towards others, but towards thee
Her heart is honest, her intention pure.
Mine eyes are open now,—alas, too late!
I was in favour—on the favourite
How tenderly she fawn'd! I'm fallen now,
And she, like fortune, turns her back on me.

Yes, now she comes, the agent of my foe,
She glides along, the little artful snake,
Hissing, with slipp'ry tongue, her magic tones.
How gracious seem'd she! More than ever gracious!
How soothingly her honeyed accents flow'd!
Yet could the flattery not long conceal
The false intention; on her brow appear'd
Too legibly inscrib'd the opposite
Of all she utter'd. Quick I am to feel
When'er the entrance to my heart is sought
With a dishonest purpose. I should hence!
Should hie to Florence, with convenient speed.

And why to Florence? Ah, I see it all.
There reigns the rising house of Medici;
True, with Ferrara not in open feud,
But secret rivalry, with chilling hand,
Doth hold asunder e'en the noblest hearts.
If from those noble princes I should reap
Distinguish'd marks of favour, as indeed
I may anticipate, the courtier here
Would soon impugn my gratitude and truth;
And would, with easy wile, achieve his purpose.

Yes, I will go, but not as ye desire;
I will away, and farther than ye think.

Why should I linger? Who detains me here?
Too well I understood each several word
That I drew forth from Leonora's lips!

With anxious heed each syllable I caught;
And now I fully know the Princess' mind—
That too is certain; let me not despair!
"Without reluctance she will let me go,
If it promote my welfare." Would her heart
Were master'd by a passion that would overwhelm
Me and my welfare! Oh, more welcome far
The grasp of death than of the frigid hand
That passively resigns me!—Yes, I go!—
Now be upon thy guard, and let no show
Of love or friendship bind thee! None hath power
Now to deceive thee, if not self-deceiv'd.

SCENE IV.

ANTONIO, TASSO.

ANTONIO.

Tasso, I come to say a word to thee,
If thou'rt dispos'd to hear me tranquilly.

TASSO.

I am denied, thou know'st, the power to act;
It well becomes me to attend and listen.

ANTONIO.

Tranquil I find thee, as I hop'd to find,
And speak to thee in all sincerity.
But in the Prince's name I first dissolve
The slender band, that seem'd to fetter thee.

TASSO.

Caprice dissolves it, as caprice impos'd;
I yield, and no judicial sentence claim.

ANTONIO.

Next, Tasso, on my own behalf I speak.
I have, it seems, more deeply wounded thee,
Than I,—myself by divers passions mov'd,—
Was conscious of. But no insulting word
Hath from my lip incautiously escap'd.

Naught hast thou, as a noble, to avenge,
And, as a man, wilt not refuse thy pardon.

TASSO.

Whether contempt or insult galls the most,
I will not now determine; that doth pierce
The inmost marrow, this but frets the skin.
The shaft of insult back returns to him
Who wing'd the missile, and the practis'd sword
Soon reconciles the opinion of the world—
A wounded heart is difficult to cure.

ANTONIO.

'Tis now my turn to press thee urgently;
Oh, step not back, yield to mine earnest wish,
The Prince's wish, who sends me unto thee.

TASSO.

I know the claims of duty, and submit.
Be it, as far as possible, forgiven!
The poets tell us of a magic spear,
Which could a wound, inflicted by itself,
Through friendly contact, once again restore.
The human tongue hath also such a power;
I will not peevishly resist it now.

ANTONIO.

I thank thee, and desire that thou at once
Wouldst put my wish to serve thee to the proof.
Then say if I in aught can pleasure thee;—
Most gladly will I do so; therefore speak.

TASSO.

Thine offer tallies with my secret wish.
But now thou hast restor'd my liberty,
Procure for me, I pray, the use of it.

ANTONIO.

What meanest thou? More plainly state thy wish.

TASSO.

My poem, as thou knowest, I have ended;
Yet much it wants to render it complete.

To-day I gave it to the Prince, and hoped
At the same time to proffer my request.
Full many of my friends I now should find
In Rome assembled; they have writ to me
Their judgments touching divers passages;
By many I could profit; others still
Require consideration; and some lines
I should be loath to alter, till at least
My judgment has been better satisfied.
All this by letter cannot be arrang'd,
While intercourse would soon untie the knots.
I thought myself to ask the Prince to-day:
Th' occasion failed; I dare not venture now,
And must for this permission trust to thee.

ANTONIO.

It seems imprudent to absent thyself
Just at the moment when thy finished work
Commends thee to the Princess and the Prince.
A day of favour is a day of harvest:
We should be busy when the corn is ripe.
Naught wilt thou win if thou departest hence,
Perchance thou'lt lose what thou hast won already
Presence is still a powerful deity,—
Learn to respect her influence,—tarry here!

TASSO.

I nothing have to fear; Alphons is noble,
Such hath he always prov'd himself tow'rds me;—
To his heart only will I owe the boon
Which now I crave. By no mean, servile arts
Will I obtain his favour. Naught will I receive
Which it can e'er repent him to have given.

ANTONIO.

Then do not now solicit leave to go;
He will not willingly accord thy suit,
And much I fear he will reject it, Tasso.

TASSO.

Duly entreated, he will grant my prayer;
Thou hast the power to move him, if thou wilt.

ANTONIO.

But what sufficient reason shall I urge?

TASSO.

Let every stanza of my poem speak!
The scope was lofty that I aim'd to reach,
Though to my genius inaccessible.
Labour and strenuous effort have not fail'd;
The cheerful stroll of many a lovely day,
The silent watch of many a solemn night,
Have to this pious lay been consecrate.
With modest daring I aspir'd to near
The mighty masters of the olden time;
With lofty courage plann'd to rouse our age
From lengthen'd sleep, to deeds of high emprise;
Then with a christian host I hop'd to share
The toil and glory of a holy war.
And that my song may rouse the noblest men
It must be worthy of its lofty aim.
What worth it hath is to Alphonso due;
For its completion I would owe him thanks.

ANTONIO.

The Prince himself is here, with other men,
Able as those of Rome to be thy guides.
Here is thy station, here complete thy work;
Then haste to Rome to carry out thy plan.

TASSO.

Alphonso first inspir'd my muse, and he
Will be the last to counsel me. Thy judgment,
The judgment also of the learned men
Assembled at our court, I highly value;
Ye shall determine when my friends at Rome
Fail to produce conviction in my mind.
But them I must consult. Gonzaga there
Hath summon'd a tribunal before which
I must present myself. I scarce can wait.
Flaminio de' Nobili, Angelio
Da Barga, Antoniano, and Speron Speroni!

To thee they must be known.—What names they are!
They in my soul, to worth which gladly yields,
Inspire at once both confidence and fear.

ANTONIO.

Self-occupied, thou think'st not of the Prince.
I tell thee that he will not let thee go;
And if he does, 'twill be against his wish.
Thou wilt not surely urge what he to thee
Unwillingly would grant. And shall I here
Still mediate, what I cannot approve?

TASSO.

Dost thou refuse me then my first request
When I would put thy friendship to the proof?

ANTONIO.

Timely denial is the surest test
Of genuine friendship; love doth oft confer
A baneful good, when it consults the wish,
And not the happiness of him who sues.
Thou in this moment dost appear to me
To overprize the object of thy wish,
Which, on the instant, thou wouldst have fulfill'd.
The erring man would oft by vehemence
Compensate what he lacks in truth and power;
Duty enjoins me now, with all my might,
To check the rashness that would lead thee wrong.

TASSO.

I long have known this tyranny of friendship,
Which of all tyrannies appears to me
The least endurable. Because forsooth
Our judgments differ, thine must needs be right;
I gladly own that thou dost wish my welfare,
Require me not to seek it in thy way.

ANTONIO.

And wouldst thou have me, Tasso, in cold blood,
With full and clear conviction, injure thee?

TASSO.

I will at once absolve thee from this care !
Thou hast no power to hold me with thy words.
Thou hast declared me free ; these doors which lead
Straight to the Prince, stand open to me now.
The choice I leave to thee. Or thou or I !
The Prince goes forth, no time is to be lost ;
Determine promptly ! Dost thou still refuse,
I go myself, let come of it what will.

ANTONIO.

A little respite grant me ; not to-day ;
Wait, I beseech thee, till the Prince returns !

TASSO.

If it were possible, this very hour !
My soles are scorch'd upon this marble floor,
Nor can my spirit rest until the dust
Of the free highway shrouds the fugitive.
I do not entreat thee ! How unfit I am
Now to appear before the Prince thou seest,
And thou must see, how can I hide from thee,
That I'm no longer master of myself ;
No power on earth can sway my energies ;
Fetters alone can hold me in control !
No tyrant is the Prince, he spake me free.
Once to his words how gladly I gave ear !
To-day to hearken is impossible.
O let me have my freedom but to-day,
That my vex'd spirit may regain its peace !
Back to my duty I will soon return.

ANTONIO.

Thou mak'st me dubious. How shall I resolve ?
That error is contagious, I perceive.

TASSO.

If thy professions I'm to count sincere,
Perform what I desire, as well as thou canst.
Then will the Prince release me ; and I lose

Neither his favour nor his gracious aid.
For that I'll thank thee, ay, with cordial thanks
But if thy bosom bear an ancient grudge,
Wouldst thou for ever banish me this court,
For ever wouldst thou mar my destiny,
And drive me friendless forth into the world,
Then hold thy purpose and resist my prayer!

ANTONIO.

Oh, Tasso,—for I'm doom'd to injure thee,
I choose the way which thou thyself dost choose
The issue will determine who doth err!
Thou wilt away! I warn thee ere thou goest:
Scarce shalt thou turn thy back upon this house
Ere thou shalt yearn in spirit to return,
While wilful humour still shall urge thee on.
Sorrow, distraction, and desponding gloom
In Rome await thee. There as well as here
Thou'lt miss thine aim. But this I do not say
To counsel thee; alas! I but predict
What soon will happen, and invite thee, Tasso,
In the worst exigence to trust to me.
I now, at thy desire, will seek the Prince.

SCENE V.

TASSO (*alone*).

Ay, go, and in the fond assurance go,
That thou hast power to bend me to thy will.
I learn dissimulation, for thou art
An able master, and I prompt to learn.
Thus life full oft compels us to appear,
Yea, e'en to be like those, whom in our hearts
We haughtily despise. How clearly now
I see the subtle web of court intrigue!
Antonio desires to drive me hence,
Yet would not seem to drive me. He doth play
The kind, considerate friend, that I may seem
Incapable and weak; installs himself
My guardian too, degrading to a child,

Him whom he could not bend to be a slave.
With clouds of error thus he darkens truth,
And blinds alike the Princess and the Prince.

They should indeed retain me, so he counsels,
For with fair talents Nature has endow'd me;
Although, alas, she has accompanied
Her lofty gifts with many weaknesses,
With a foreboding spirit, boundless pride,
And sensibility too exquisite.
It cannot now be otherwise, since Fate,
In her caprice, has fashion'd such a man;
We must consent to take him as he is,
Be patient, bear with him, and then, perchance,
On days auspicious, as an unsought good,
Find pleasure in his joy-diffusing gift;
While for the rest, why e'en as he was born,
He must have licence both to live and die.

Where now Alphonso's firm and constant mind?
The man who braves his foe, who shields his friend,
In him who treats me thus can I discover?
Now I discern the measure of my woe!
This is my destiny,—towards me alone
All change their nature,—ay, the very men,
Who are with others stedfast, firm, and true,
In one brief moment, for an idle breath,
Swerve lightly from their constant quality.

Has not this man's arrival here, alone,
And in a single hour, my fortune marr'd?
Has he not, even to its very base,
Laid low the structure of my happiness?
'This, too, must I endure,—even to-day!
Yea, as before all press'd around me, now
I am by all abandon'd; as before
Each strove to seize, to win me for himself,
All thrust me from them, and avoid me now.
And wherefore? My desert and all the love,
Wherewith I was so bounteously endow'd,
Does he alone in equal balance weigh?

Yes, all forsake me now. Thou too! Thou too!
Beloved Princess, thou too leavest me!
Hath she, to cheer me in this dismal hour,
A single token of her favour sent?
Have I deserved this from her?—Thou, poor heart,
Whose very nature was to honour her!—
How, when her gentle accents touch'd mine ear,
Feelings unutterable thrill'd my breast!
When she appeared, a more ethereal light
Outshone the light of day. Her eyes, her lips
Drew me resistlessly, my very knees
Trembled beneath me, and my spirit's strength
Was all requir'd to hold myself erect,
And curb the strong desire to throw myself
Prostrate before her. Scarcely could I quell
The giddy rapture.—Be thou firm, my heart!
No cloud obscure thee, thou clear mind! She, too,
Dare I pronounce what yet I scarce believe?
I must believe, yet dread to utter it.
She too! She too! Think not the slightest blame,
Only conceal it not. She too! She too!

Alas! This word, whose truth I ought to doubt,
Long as a breath of faith surviv'd in me;
This word, like fate's decree, doth now at last,
Engrave itself upon the brazen rim
That rounds the full-scroll'd tablet of my woe.
Now first, mine enemies are strong indeed;
For ever now I am of strength bereft.
How shall I combat when she stands opposed
Amidst the hostile army? How endure
If she no more reach forth her hand to me?
If her kind glance the suppliant meet no more?
Ay, thou hast dar'd to think, to utter it,
And ere thou couldst have fear'd,—behold 'tis true!
And now, ere yet despair, with brazen talons,
Doth rend asunder thy bewilder'd brain,
Lament thy bitter doom, and utter forth
The unavailing cry—She too! She too!

ACT V.

SCENE I. *A Garden.*

ALPHONSO, ANTONIO.

ANTONIO.

Obedient to thy wish, I went to Tasso
A second time, I come from him but now.
I sought to move him, yea, I strongly urged;
But from his fix'd resolve he swerveth not;
He earnestly entreats that for a time
Thou wouldst permit him to repair to Rome.

ALPHONSO.

His purpose much annoys me, I confess;—
I rather tell thee my vexation now,
Than let it strengthen, smother'd in my breast.
He fain would travel, good! I hold him not.
He will depart, he will to Rome; so be it!
Let not the crafty Medici, nor yet
Scipio Gonzaga wrest him from me though!
'Tis this hath made our Italy so great,
That rival neighbours zealously contend
To foster and employ the ablest men.
Like chief without an army, shows a prince
Who round him gathers not superior minds;
And who the voice of Poesy disdains
Is a barbarian, be he who he may.
Tasso I found, I chose him for myself,
I number him with pride among my train;
And having done so much for him already,
I should be loath to lose him without cause.

ANTONIO.

I feel embarrass'd, Prince, for in thy sight
I bear the blame of what to-day befell;
That I was in the wrong, I frankly own,
And look for pardon to thy clemency:
But I were inconsolable couldst thou,
E'en for a moment, doubt my honest zeal

In seeking to appease him. Speak to me
With gracious look, that so I may regain
My self-reliance and my wonted calm.

ALPHONSO.

Feel no disquietude, Antonio;—
In no wise do I count the blame as thine;
Too well I know the temper of the man,
Know all too well, what I have done for him,
How often I have spared him, and how oft
Towards him I have o'erlooked my rightful claims.
O'er may things we gain the mastery,
But stern necessity and lengthen'd time
Scarce give a man dominion o'er himself.

ANTONIO.

When other men toil in behalf of one;
'Tis fit this one with diligence inquire
How he may profit others in return.
He who hath fashion'd his own mind so well,
Who hath aspir'd to make each several science
And the whole range of human lore, his own,
Is he not doubly bound to rule himself?
Yet doth he ever give it e'en a thought?

ALPHONSO.

Continued rest is not ordain'd for man!
Still, when we purpose to enjoy ourselves,
To try our valour, fortune sends a foe,
To try our equanimity, a friend.

ANTONIO.

Does Tasso e'en fulfil man's primal duty,
To regulate his appetite, in which
He is not, like the brute, restrain'd by nature?
Does he not rather, like a child, indulge
In all that charms and gratifies his taste?
When has he mingled water with his wine?
Comfits and condiments, and potent drinks,
One with another still he swallows down,
And then complains of his bewilder'd brain,

His hasty temper, and his fever'd blood,
Railing at nature and at destiny.
How oft I've heard him in a bitter style
With childish folly argue with his leech.
'Twould raise a laugh, if aught were laughable
Which teases others and torments oneself.
"Oh, this is torture!" anxiously he cries,
Then in splenetic mood, "Why boast your art?
Prescribe a cure!" "Good!" then exclaims the leech.
"Abstain from this or that." "That can I not."
"Then take this potion." "No, it nauseates me,
The taste is horrid, nature doth rebel."—
"Well then, drink water." "Water! never more!
Like hydrophobia is my dread of it."
"Then your disease is hopeless." "Why, I pray?"
"One evil symptom will succeed another,
And though your ailment should not fatal prove,
'Twill daily more torment you." "Fine, indeed,
Then wherefore play the leech? You know my case,
You should devise a remedy, and one
That's palatable too, that I may not
First suffer pain, before reliev'd from it."
I see thee smile, my Prince, 'tis but the truth;
Doubtless thyself hast heard it from his lips.

ALPHONSO.

Oft I have heard, and have as oft excus'd.

ANTONIO.

It is most certain, an intemperate life,
As it engenders wild, distemper'd dreams,
At length doth make us dream in open day.
What's his suspicion but a troubled dream?
He thinks himself environ'd still by foes.
None can discern his gift who envy not,
And all who envy, hate and persecute.
Oft with complaints he has molested thee:
Notes intercepted, violated locks,
Poison, the dagger! All before him float!
Thou dost investigate his grievance,—well,
Doth aught appear? Why, scarcely a pretext.

No sovereign's shelter gives him confidence.
The bosom of no friend can comfort him.
Wouldst promise happiness to such a man,
Or look to him for joy unto thyself?

ALPHONSO.

Thou wouldst be right, Antonio, if from him
I sought my own immediate benefit.
But I have learn'd no longer to expect
Service direct and unconditional.
All do not serve us in the selfsame way;
Who needeth much, according to his gifts
Must each employ, so is he ably served.
This lesson from the Medici we learn'd,
'Tis practis'd even by the popes themselves.
With what forbearance, magnanimity,
And princely patience, have they not endur'd
Full many a genius, who seem'd not to need
Their ample favour, yet who needed it.

ANTONIO.

Who knows not this, my Prince? The toil of life
Alone can tutor us life's gifts to prize.
In youth he hath already won so much;
He cannot relish aught in quietness.
O that he were compell'd to earn the blessings
Which now with liberal hand are thrust upon him!
With manly courage he would brace his strength,
And at each onward step feel new content.
The needy noble has attain'd the height
Of his ambition, if his gracious prince
Raise him, with hand benign, from poverty,
And choose him as an inmate of the court.
Should he then honour him with confidence,
And before others raise him to his side,
Consulting him in war, or state affairs,
Why then methinks, with silent gratitude,
The modest man may bless his lucky fate.
And with all this, Tasso enjoys besides
Youth's purest happiness:—his fatherland
Esteems him highly, looks to him with hope.

Trust me for this — his peevish discontent
On the broad pillow of his fortune rests.
He comes, dismiss him kindly, give him time
In Rome, in Naples, wheresoe'er he will,
To search in vain for what he misses here,
Yet here alone can ever hope to find.

ALPHONSO.

Back to Ferrara will he first return ?

ANTONIO.

He rather would remain in Belriguardo.
And, for his journey, what he may require,
He will request a friend to forward to him.

ALPHONSO.

I am content. My sister, with her friend,
Return immediately to town, and I,
Riding with speed, hope to reach home before them.
Thou'lt follow straight when thou for him hast car'd ;
Give needful orders to the castellan,
That in the castle he may here abide
So long as he desires, until his friend
Forward his equipage, and till the letters,
Which we shall give him to our friends at Rome,
Have been transmitted. Here he comes. Farewell!!

SCENE II.

ALPHONSO, TASSO.

TASSO (*with embarrassment*).

The favour thou so oft has shown me, Prince,
Is manifest, in clearest light, to-day.
The deed which, in the precincts of thy palace,
I lawlessly committed, thou hast pardon'd ;
Thou hast appeas'd and reconciled my foe ;
Thou dost permit me for a time to leave
The shelter of thy side, and rich in bounty,
Wilt not with draw from me thy generous aid.

Inspir'd with confidence, I now depart,
And trust that this brief absence will dispel
The heavy gloom that now oppresses me.
My renovated soul shall plume her wing,
And pressing forward on the bright career,
Which, glad and bold, encourag'd by thy glance,
I enter'd first, deserve thy grace anew.

ALPHONSO.

Prosperity attend thee on thy way!
With joyous spirit, and to health restor'd,
Return again amongst us. Thus thou shalt
To us, in double measure, for each hour
Thou now depriv'st us of, requital bring.
Letters I give thee to my friends at Rome,
And also to my kinsmen, and desire
That to my people everywhere thou shouldst
Confidingly attach thyself;—though absent,
Thee I shall certainly regard as mine.

TASSO.

Thou dost, O Prince, o'erwhelm with favours one
Who feels himself unworthy, who e'en wants
Ability to render fitting thanks.
Instead of thanks I proffer a request!
My poem now lies nearest to my heart.
My labours have been strenuous, yet I feel
That I am far from having reach'd my aim.
Fain would I there resort, where hovers yet
The inspiring genius of the mighty dead,
Still raining influence; there would I become
Once more a learner, then more worthily
My poem might rejoice in thine applause.
Oh, give me back the manuscript, which now
I feel asham'd to know within thy hand.

ALPHONSO.

Thou wilt not surely take from me to-day
What but to-day to me thou hast consign'd.
Between thy poem, Tasso, and thyself
Let me now stand as arbiter. Beware—

Nor, through assiduous diligence, impair
The genial nature that pervades thy rhymes:
And give not ear to every critic's word!
With nicest tact the poet reconciles
The judgments thousandfold of different men,
In thoughts and life at variance with each other;
And fears not numbers to displease, that he
Still greater numbers may enchant the more.
And yet I say not but that here and there
Thou mayst, with modest care, employ the file.
I promise thee at once, that in brief space,
Thou shalt receive a copy of thy poem.
Meanwhile I will retain it in my hands,
That I may first enjoy it with my sisters.
Then, if thou bring'st it back more perfect still,
Our joy will be enhanc'd, and here and there,
We'll hint corrections, only as thy friends.

TASSO.

I can but modestly repeat my prayer;
Let me receive the copy with all speed.
My spirit resteth solely on this work,
Its full completion it must now attain.

ALPHONSO.

I praise the ardour that inspires thee, Tasso!
Yet, were it possible, thou for awhile
Shouldst rest thy mind, seek pleasure in the world,
And find some means to cool thy heated blood.
Then would thy mental powers restor'd to health,
Through their sweet harmony, spontaneous yield,
What now, with anxious toil, in vain thou seekest

TASSO.

My Prince, it seems so, but I am in health
When I can yield myself to strenuous toil,
And this my toil again restores my health.
Long hast thou known me, thou must long have seen,
I thrive not in luxurious indolence.
Rest brings no rest to me. Alas, I feel it;
My mind, by nature, never was ordain'd,

Borne on the yielding billows of the hour,
To float in pleasure o'er time's ample sea.

ALPHONSO.

Thine aims, thy dreams, all whelm thee in thyself.
Around us there doth yawn full many a gulph,
Scoop'd by the hand of destiny ; but here,
In our own bosoms, lies the deepest ;—ay !
And tempting 'tis to hurl oneself therein !
I charge thee, Tasso, snatch thee from thyself !
The man will profit, though the bard may lose.

TASSO.

To quell the impulse I should vainly strive,
Which ceaseless in my bosom, day and night
Alternates ever. Life were life no more
Were I to cease to poetise, to dream.
Wouldst thou forbid the cunning worm to spin,
For that to nearer death he spins himself ?
From his own being, he unfoldeth still
The costly texture, nor suspends his toil,
Till in his shroud he hath immur'd himself.
Oh, to us mortals may some gracious power
Accord the insect's enviable doom,
In some new sunny vale, with sudden joy,
To spread our eager pinions !

ALPHONSO.

List to me !

Thou givest still to others to enjoy
Life with a twofold relish. Learn thyself
To know the worth of life, whose richest boon
In tenfold measure is bestow'd on thee.
Now fare thee well ! The sooner thou returnest
All the more cordial will thy welcome be.

SCENE III.

TASSO (*alone*).

Hold fast, my heart, thy work has been well done !
The task was arduous, for ne'er before

Didst thou or wish or venture to dissemble.
Ay, thou didst hear it, that was not his mind,
Nor his the words; to me it still appeared,
As if I heard again Antonio's voice.
Only give heed! Henceforth on every side
Thou'lt hear that voice. Be firm, my heart, be firm!
'Tis only for a moment. He who learns
The trick of simulation late in life,
Doth outwardly the natural semblance wear
Of honest faith; practise, and thou'lt succeed.

(After a pause.)

Too soon thou triumphest, for lo! she comes!
The gentle Princess comes! O what a feeling!
She enters now, suspicion in my breast
And angry sullenness dissolve in grief.

SCENE IV.

PRINCESS, TASSO.

(Towards the end of the Scene the others.)

PRINCESS.

Thou thinkest to forsake us, or remainest
Rather behind in Belriguardo, Tasso,
And then thou wilt withdraw thyself from us?
I trust thine absence will not be for long.
To Rome thou goest?

TASSO.

Thither first I wend,
And if, as I have reason to expect,
I from my friends kind welcome there receive,
With care and patient toil I may, at length,
Impart its highest finish to my poem.
Full many men I find assembled there,
Masters who may be styled in every art.
Ay, and in that first city of the world,
Hath not each site, yea, every stone a tongue?
How many thousand silent monitors,
With earnest mien, majestic, beckon us!
There if I fail to make my work complete,

I never shall complete it. Ah, I feel it—
Success doth wait on no attempt of mine!
Still altering, I ne'er shall perfect it.
I feel, yea, deeply feel, the noble art
That quickens others, and does strength infuse
Into the healthy soul, will drive me forth,
And bring me to destruction. Forth I haste!
I will to Naples first.

PRINCESS.

Darest thou venture?
Still is the rigid sentence unrepeal'd
Which banish'd thee, together with thy father.

TASSO.

I know the danger, and have ponder'd it.
Disguis'd I go, in tattered garb, perchance
Of shepherd, or of pilgrim, meanly clad.
Unseen I wander through the city, where
The movements of the many shroud the one.
Thee to the shore I hasten, find a bark,
With people of Sorrento, peasant folk,
Returning home from market, for I too
Must hasten to Sorrento. There resides
My sister, ever to my parents' heart,
Together with myself, a mournful joy.
I speak not in the bark, I step ashore
Also in silence, slowly I ascend
The upward path, and at the gate inquire:
Where may she dwell, Cornelia Sersale?
With friendly mien, a woman at her wheel
Shows me the street, the house; I hasten on;
The children run beside me, and survey
The gloomy stranger, with the shaggy locks.
Thus I approach the threshold. Open stands
The cottage door; I step into the house—

PRINCESS.

Oh, Tasso! if 'tis possible, look up,
And see the danger that environs thee!
I spare thy feelings, else I well might ask,

Is't noble, so to speak, as now thou speakest?
Is't noble of thyself alone to think,
As if thou didst not wound the heart of friends?
My brother's sentiments, are they conceal'd?
And how we sisters prize and honour thee,—
Hast thou not known and felt it? Can it be,
That a few moments should have alter'd all?
Oh, Tasso, if thou wilt indeed depart,
Yet do not leave behind thee grief and care.
(TASSO turns away.)

How soothing to the sorrowing heart to give,
To the dear friend who leaves us for a season,
Some trifling present, though 'twere nothing more
Than a new mantle, or a sword perchance!
There's naught, alas, that we can offer thee,
For thou ungraciously dost fling aside
E'en what thou hast. Thou choosest for thyself
The pilgrim's scallop shell, his sombre weeds,
His staff to lean on, and departing thus,
In willing poverty, from us thou takest
The only pleasure we could share with thee.

TASSO.

Then thou wilt not reject me utterly?
O precious words! O comfort dear and sweet!
Do thou defend me! Shield me with thy care!—
O send me to Consandoli, or here,
Keep me in Belriguardo, where thou wilt!
The Prince is lord of many a pleasant seat,
Of many a garden, which the whole year round
Is duly kept, whose paths ye scarcely tread
A single day, perchance but for an hour.
Then, choose among them all the most remote
Which through long years ye have not visited,
And which perchance e'en now untended lies.
Oh send me thither! There let me be yours!
And I will tend thy trees! With screen and tile
Will shield thy citrons from autumnal blasts,
Fencing them round with interwoven reeds!
Flowers of the fairest hue shall in the beds
Strike deep their spreading roots; with nicest care

Each pathway, every corner shall be kept.
And of the palace also give me charge!
At proper times the windows I will open,
Lest noxious vapour should the pictures mar;
The walls, with choicest stucco-work adorn'd,
I with light feather-work will free from dust;
There shall the polish'd pavement brightly shine,
There shall no stone, no tiling be misplaced;
There shall no weeds sprout from the crevices!

PRINCESS.

I find no counsel in my troubled breast,
And find no comfort for thyself and—us.
Around I look to see if some kind god
Will haply grant us succour, and reveal
Some healing plant, or potion, to restore
Peace to thy 'wilder'd senses, peace to us!
The truest word that floweth from the lip,
The surest remedy hath lost its power.
Leave thee I must,—yet doth my heart refuse
From thee to part.

TASSO.

Ye gods! And is it she?
She who thus pities, who thus speaks with thee?
And couldst thou e'er mistake that noble heart?
And in her presence, was it possible,
That thee despondency could seize, could master?
No, no, 'tis thou! I am myself again!
O speak once more! Sweet comfort let me hear
Again from thy dear lips! Speak, nor withdraw
Thy counsel from me.—Say, what must I do,
That I may win the pardon of the Prince,
That thou thyself mayst freely pardon me,
That ye may both with pleasure take me back
Into your princely service? Speak to me.

PRINCESS.

It is but little we require from 'hee,
And yet that little seemeth all too much.
Freely shouldst thou resign thyself to us.
We wish not from thee aught but what thou art,

If only with thyself thou wert at peace.
When joy thou feelest, thou dost cause us joy,
When thou dost fly from it, thou grievest us ;
And if sometimes we are impatient with thee,
'Tis only that we fain would succour thee,
And feel, alas, our succour all in vain,
If thou the friendly hand forbear to grasp,
Stretched longingly, which yet doth reach thee not.

TASSO.

'Tis thou thyself, a holy angel still,
As when at first thou didst appear to me !
The mortal's darken'd vision, oh, forgive,
If while he gazed, he for a moment err'd ;
Now he again discerns thee, and his soul
Aspires to honour thee eternally.
A flood of tenderness o'erwhelms my heart—
She stands before me ! She ! What feeling this ?
Is it distraction draws me unto thee ?
Or is it madness ? or a sense sublime
Which apprehends the purest, loftiest truth ?
Yes, 'tis the only feeling that on earth
Hath power to make and keep me truly blest,
Or that could overwhelm me with despair,
What time I wrestled with it, and resolved
To banish it for ever from my heart.
This fiery passion I had thought to quell,
Still with mine inmost being strove and strove,
And in the strife my very self destroyed,
Which is to thee indissolubly bound.

PRINCESS.

If thou wouldst have me, Tasso, listen to thee,
Restrain this fervid glow, which frightens me.

TASSO.

Restrains the goblet's rim the bubbling wine
That sparkling foams, and overflows its bounds ?
Thine every word doth elevate my bliss,
With every word more brightly gleams thine eye,
Over my spirit's depths there comes a change ;

Reliev'd from dark perplexity, I feel,
 Free as a god, and all I owe to thee!
 A charm unspeakable, which masters me,
 Flows from thy lips. Thou makest me all thine.
 Of mine own being naught belongs to me.
 Mine eye grows dim in happiness and light,
 My senses fail; no more my foot sustains me,
 Thou draw'st me to thee with resistless might,
 And my heart rushes self-impell'd to thee.
 Me hast thou won for all eternity,
 Then take my whole of being to thyself.

(He throws himself into her arms, and clasps her to his bosom.)

PRINCESS

(Throwing him from her and retiring in haste).
 Away!

LEONORA

(Who has for some time appeared in the background, hastening forward).

What hath befallen? Tasso! Tasso!

(She follows the PRINCESS.)

TASSO *(about to follow her).*

O God!

ALPHONSO

(Who has for some time been approaching with ANTONIO).

He is distracted, hold him fast.

[Exit.

SCENE V.

TASSO, ANTONIO.

ANTONIO.

If that a foeman—as thou deem'st thyself
 Environ'd by a multitude of foes—
 Beside thee stood, how would he triumph now!
 Unhappy man! I am not yet myself!
 When something quite unparallel'd occurs,
 When something monstrous first arrests our sight,

The stagger'd spirit stands a moment still,
For we know nothing to compare it with.

TASSO (*after a long pause*).

Fulfil thine office, I perceive 'tis thou!
Ay, thou deserv'st the Prince's confidence.
Fulfil thine office, since my doom is seal'd,
With ling'ring tortures, torture me to death!
Draw! draw the shaft, that I may feel the barb,
That lacerates, with cruel pangs, my heart!
The tyrant's precious instrument art thou;
Be thou his gaoler,—executioner,—
For these are offices become thee well!

(*Towards the scene.*)

Yes, tyrant, go! Thou couldst not to the last
Thy wonted mask retain; in triumph go!
Thy slave thou hast well pinion'd, hast reserv'd
For predetermin'd and protracted pangs:
Yes, go! I hate thee. In my heart I feel
The horror which despotic power excites,
When it is grasping, cruel, and unjust.

(*After a pause.*)

Thus, then, at last I see myself exil'd,
Turn'd off, and thrust forth like a mendicant!
Thus they with garlands wreath'd me, but to lead
The victim to the shrine of sacrifice!
Thus, at the very last, with cunning words,
They drew from me my only property,
My poem,—ay, and they retain it too!
Now is my one possession in your hands,
My bright credential wheresoe'er I went;
My sole resource 'gainst biting poverty!
Ay, now I see why I must take mine ease.
'Tis a conspiracy, and thou the head.
Thus that my song may not be perfected,
That my renown may ne'er be spread abroad,
That envy still a thousand faults may find,
And my unhonoured name forgotten die;
Therefore I must consent to idleness,
Therefore must spare my faculties, myself.

O precious friendship! Dear solicitude!
Odious appear'd the dark conspiracy
Which ceaseless round me wove its viewless web,
But still more odious does it now appear!

And, thou too, Siren! who so tenderly
Didst lead me on with thy celestial mien,
Thee now I know! Wherefore, O God, so late!

But we so willingly deceive ourselves,
We honour reprobates, who honour us.
True men are never to each other known;
Such knowledge is reserv'd for galley-slaves,
Chain'd to a narrow plank, who gasp for breath,
Where none hath aught to ask, nor aught to lose,
Where for a rascal each avows himself,
And holds his neighbour for a rascal too,—
Such men as these perchance may know each other.
But for the rest, we courteously misjudge them,
Hoping they may misjudge us in return.

How long thine hallow'd image from my gaze
Veil'd the coquette, working, with paltry arts!
The mask has fallen!—Now I see Armida
Denuded of her charms,—yes, thou art she,
Of whom my bodeful verse prophetic sang!

And then the little, cunning go-between!
With what profound contempt I view her now!
I hear the rustling of her stealthy step,
As round me still she spreads her artful toils.
Ay, now I know you! And let that suffice!
And misery, though it beggar me of all,
I honour still,—for it hath taught me truth.

ANTONIO.

I hear thee with amazement, though I know
How thy rash humour, Tasso, urges thee
To rush in haste to opposite extremes.
Collect thy spirit and command thy rage!
Thou speakest slander, dost indulge in words

Which to thine anguish though they be forgiven,
Yet thou canst ne'er forgive unto thyself.

TASSO.

O, speak not to me with a gentle lip,
Let me not hear one prudent word from thee!
Leave me my sullen happiness, that I
May not regain my senses, but to lose them.
My very bones are crush'd, yet do I live;—
Ay! live to feel the agonising pain.
Despair enfolds me in its ruthless grasp,
And, in the hell-pang that annihilates,
These sland'rous words are but the feeble cry,
Wrung from the depth of my sore agony.
I will away! If honest, point the path,
And suffer me at once to fly from hence.

ANTONIO.

In thine extremity I will not leave thee;
And shouldst thou wholly lose thy self-control,
My patience shall not fail.

TASSO.

And must I then
Yield myself up a prisoner to thee?
Resign'd I yield myself, and it is done;
I cease to struggle, and 'tis well with me—
Now let mine anguish'd heart recall how fair
What, as in sport, I madly flung away.
They hence depart—O God! I there behold
The dust, ascending from their chariot wheels—
The riders in advance—ay, there they go
E'en to the very place from whence I came!
Now they are gone—they are estranged from me.
O that I once again had kiss'd his hand!
O that I once again might say farewell!
Once only might I falter: O forgive!
Once only hear the word: Go, thou'rt forgiven!
Alas! I hear it not;—I ne'er shall hear it—
Yes, I will go! Let me but say farewell,
Only farewell! Give me, oh give me back

Their long'd-for presence for a single moment!
Perchance I might recover! Never more!
I am rejected, doom'd to banishment!
Alas! I am self-banish'd, never more
To hear that gentle voice, that tender glance
To meet no more—

ANTONIO.

Yet hear the voice of one
Who, not without emotion, stands beside thee!
Thou'rt not so wretched, Tasso, as thou thinkest.
Collect thyself! Too much thou art unmann'd.

TASSO.

And am I then as wretched as I seem?
Am I as weak as I do show myself?
Say, is all lost? Has sorrow's direful stroke,
As with an earthquake's sudden shock, transform'd
The stately pile into a ruin'd heap?
Is all the genius flown that did erewhile
So richly charm, and so exalt my soul?
Is all the power extinguish'd which of yore
Stirr'd in my bosom's depths? Am I become
A nothing? A mere nothing? No, all's here!
I have it still, and yet myself am nothing!
I from myself am sever'd, she from me!

ANTONIO.

Though to thyself thou seemest so forlorn,
Be calm, and bear in mind what still thou art!

TASSO.

Ay, in due season thou remindest me!—
Hath history no example for mine aid?
Before me doth there rise no man of worth
Who more hath borne than I, that with his fate
Mine own comparing, I may gather strength.
No, all is gone!—But one thing still remains;
Tears, balmy tears, kind nature has bestow'd.
The cry of anguish, when the man at length
Can bear no more—yea, and to me beside,

She leaves in sorrow melody and speech,
To utter forth the fulness of my woe:
Though in their mortal anguish men are dumb,
To me a God hath given to tell my grief.

(ANTONIO approaches him and takes his hand.)

Oh, noble man! thou standest firm and calm,
While I am like the tempest-driven wave.
But be not boastful of thy strength. Reflect!
Nature, whose mighty power hath fix'd the rock,
Gives to the wave its instability.
She sends her storm, the passive wave is driven,
And rolls, and swells, and falls in billowy foam.
Yet in this very wave the glorious sun
Mirrors his splendour, and the quiet stars
Upon its heaving bosom gently rest.
Dimm'd is the splendour, vanish'd is the calm!—
In danger's hour I know myself no longer,
Nor am I now asham'd of the confession.
The helm is broken, and on every side
The reeling vessel splits. The riven planks,
Bursting asunder, yawn beneath my feet!
Thus with my outstretch'd arms I cling to thee!
So doth the shipwreck'd mariner at last,
Cling to the rock, whereon his vessel struck

IPHIGENIA IN TAURIS.

A DRAMA IN FIVE ACTS.

TRANSLATED BY ANNA SWANWICK.

Like Torquato Tasso, Iphigenia was originally written in prose, and in that form was acted at the Weimar Court Theatre about 1779. Goethe himself took the part of Orestes.

INTRODUCTION.

THE drama of 'IPHIGENIA IN TAURIS' has been considered Goethe's masterpiece; it is conceived in the spirit of Greek ideality, and is characterized throughout by moral beauty and dignified repose. Schlegel* styles it an echo of Greek song, an epithet as appropriate as it is elegant; for, without any servile imitation of classic models, this beautiful drama, through the medium of its polished verse, reproduces in softened characters the graceful and colossal forms of the antique.

The destiny of Agamemnon and his race was a favourite theme of the ancients. It has been dramatized in a variety of forms by the three great masters of antiquity; and from these various sources Goethe has gathered the materials for his drama, enriching it with touches of sublimity and beauty selected indiscriminately from the works of each. The description of the Furies in the third act is worthy of Æschylus, and in the spirit of the same great writer is the exclusion of these terrific powers from the consecrated grove, symbolical of the peace which religion can alone afford to the anguish of a wounded conscience. The prominence given to the idea of destiny, together with the finished beauty of the whole, remind us of Sophocles; while the passages conveying general

* 'Dramatic Literature,' Bohn's edition, p. 518.

moral truths, scattered throughout the poem, not unfrequently recall to our recollection those of a similar character in the dramas of Euripides.

Two dramas of Euripides are founded upon the well-known story of Iphigenia. In the 'Iphigenia in Aulis,' we are introduced to the assembled hosts of Greece, detained by contrary winds in consequence of Diana's anger against Agamemnon. An oracle had declared that the goddess could only be propitiated by the sacrifice of Iphigenia, who is accordingly allured with her mother to the camp. On discovering the fearful doom which awaits her, she is at first overwhelmed with grief. She implores her father to spare her life, endeavours to touch his heart by recalling the fond memories of bygone times, and holds up her infant brother, Orestes, that he may plead for her with his tears. Learning, however, that the glory of her country depends upon her death, she rises superior to her fears, subdues her womanly weakness, and devotes herself a willing sacrifice for Greece. She is conducted to the altar, the sacred garlands are bound around her head. Calchas lifts the knife to deal the fatal stroke, when Iphigenia suddenly vanishes, and a hind of uncommon beauty lies bleeding at his feet.

In the 'IPHIGENIA IN TAURIS,' our heroine reappears in the temple of Diana, situated in the Tauric Chersonese, a savage region washed by the Euxine Sea, where, according to the ancients, all strangers were sacrificed at the altar of Diana. To this wild shore Iphigenia had been conveyed by the pitying goddess, and there, in her character of priestess, she presided over the bloody rites of the barbarians. The incidents in this drama have been adopted by Goethe as the groundwork of his poem, the chief interest in which, as in the drama of Euripides, turns upon the departure of Iphigenia and Orestes from the Taurian shore. A brief outline of the Grecian drama

will show in what particulars the modern poet has adhered to his classic model, and where he has deviated from it.

The scene of both is in the vicinity of the temple of Diana. In the opening soliloquy of the Grecian drama, Iphigenia, after lamenting her unhappy destiny, relates her dream of the previous night, from which she infers the death of Orestes. She determines to offer a libation to his memory, and while engaged in performing this pious rite, she is informed that two strangers have been captured on the shore, for whose sacrifice she is commanded to prepare. Orestes and Pylades are shortly after introduced, and, learning from the former that he is a native of Argos, she offers to spare his life provided he will carry a letter for her to Mycene. He refuses to abandon his friend; Pylades is equally disinterested; a generous contest ensues, and the latter, yielding at length to the entreaties of Orestes, consents to accept life on the proposed conditions. The letter addressed to Orestes is produced, and Iphigenia discovers her brother in the intended victim. They anxiously consider how they may escape, and Iphigenia suggests that in her character of priestess she shall lead them, together with the image of Diana, to the sea, there to be purified in the ocean waves, where they may find safety in the attendant bark. With all the wily subtlety of a Greek, she imposes upon the credulity of the barbarian monarch, and induces him not only to sanction her project, but to assist in its execution, which she at length successfully achieves. In this drama, Iphigenia, though exhibiting some noble traits, offends us by her unscrupulous violation of the truth, and by the cunning artifice which Goethe, with admirable art, has attributed to Pylades. We are the more displeased with this portrait, because we are unwilling to recognize in the crafty priestess the innocent victim, who so strongly awakens our sympathy in

the beautiful drama of 'Iphigenia in Aulis.' In the Iphigenia of Goethe, on the contrary, we discover with pleasure the same filial tenderness, and the same touching mixture of timidity and courage which characterized that interesting heroine.

In the drama of Euripides we are chiefly interested in the generous friendship of Orestes and Pylades: in that of Goethe the character of Iphigenia constitutes the chief charm, and awakens our warmest sympathy. While contemplating her, we feel as if some exquisite statue of Grecian art had become animated by a living soul, and moved and breathed before us: though exhibiting the severe simplicity which characterizes the creations of antiquity, she is far removed from all coldness and austerity; and her character, though cast in a classic mould, is free from that harsh and vindictive spirit which darkened the heroism of those barbarous times when religion lent her sanction to hatred and revenge.

The docility with which, in opposition to her own feelings, she at first consents to the stratagem of Pylades, though apparently inconsistent with her reverence for truth, is in reality a beautiful and touching trait. The conflict in her mind between intense anxiety for her brother's safety, and detestation of the artifice by which alone she thinks it can be secured, amounts almost to agony; in her extremity she calls upon the Gods, and implores them to save their image in her soul. The struggle finally subsides; she remains faithful to her high convictions, reveals the project of escape, and thus saves her soul from treachery. From the commencement of the fifth act she assumes a calm and lofty tone, as if feeling the inspiration of a noble purpose. The dignity and determination with which she opposes the cruel project of the barbarian king, remind us of the similar qualities displayed by the Antigone of Sophocles, who is

perhaps the noblest heroine of antiquity. Thus when called upon by the king to reverence the law, Iphigenia appeals to that law written in the heart, more ancient and more sacred than the ordinances of man; and Antigone, when by the interment of her brother Polynices, she has incurred the anger of the tyrant Creon, and become subjected to a cruel death, justifies herself by an appeal to the same sacred authority.

The remaining characters of the drama, though subordinate to the central figure, are in admirable keeping with it, the poet having softened down the harsh features of the barbarians, so as not to form too abrupt a contrast with the more polished Greeks, and thereby interfere with the harmony of the piece. The colossal figures of the Titans appearing in the background, and the dread power of Destiny overarching all, impart a character of solemn grandeur to the whole.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

IPHIGENIA.

ORESTES.

THOAS, *King of the Taurians.*

PYLADES.

ARKAS.

IPHIGENIA IN TAURIS.

ACT I.

SCENE I. *A Grove before the Temple of Diana.*

IPHIGENIA.

Beneath your leafy gloom, ye waving boughs
Of this old, shady, consecrated grove,
As in the goddess' silent sanctuary,
With the same shuddering feeling forth I step,
As when I trod it first, nor ever here
Doth my unquiet spirit feel at home.
Long as a higher will, to which I bow,
Hath kept me here conceal'd, still, as at first,
I feel myself a stranger. For the sea
Doth sever me, alas! from those I love,
And day by day upon the shore I stand,
The land of Hellas seeking with my soul;
But to my sighs, the hollow-sounding waves
Bring, save their own hoarse murmurs, no reply.
Alas for him! who friendless and alone,
Remote from parents and from brethren dwells;
From him grief snatches every coming joy
Ere it doth reach his lip. His yearning thoughts
Throng back for ever to his father's halls,
Where first to him the radiant sun unclosed
The gates of heav'n; where closer, day by day,
Brothers and sisters, leagued in pastime sweet,
Around each other twin'd love's tender bonds.

I will not reckon with the gods; yet truly
Deserving of lament is woman's lot.
Man rules alike at home and in the field,
Nor is in foreign climes without resource;
Him conquest crowneth, him possession gladdens,
And him an honourable death awaits.
How circumscrib'd is woman's destiny!
Obedience to a harsh, imperious lord,
Her duty, and her comfort; sad her fate,
Whom hostile fortune drives to lands remote!
Thus Thoas holds me here, a noble man
Bound with a heavy though a sacred chain.
O how it shames me, goddess, to confess
That with repugnance I perform these rites
For thee, divine protectress! unto whom
I would in freedom dedicate my life.
In thee, Diana, I have always hoped,
And still I hope in thee, who didst infold
Within the holy shelter of thine arm
The outcast daughter of the mighty king.
Daughter of Jove! hast thou from ruin'd Troy
Led back in triumph to his native land
The mighty man, whom thou didst sore afflict,
His daughter's life in sacrifice demanding,—
Hast thou for him, the godlike Agamemnon,
Who to thine altar led his darling child,
Preserv'd his wife, Electra, and his son,
His dearest treasures?—then at length restore
Thy suppliant also to her friends and home,
And save her, as thou once from death didst save,
So now, from living here, a second death.

SCENE II.

IPHIGENIA, ARKAS.

ARKAS.

The king hath sent me hither, bade me greet
With hail, and fair salute, Diana's priestess.
For new and wondrous conquest, this the day,

When to her goddess Tauris renders thanks.
I hasten on before the king and host,
Himself to herald, and its near approach.

IPHIGENIA.

We are prepar'd to give them worthy greeting;
Our goddess doth behold with gracious eye
The welcome sacrifice from Thoas' hand.

ARKAS.

Would that I also found the priestess' eye,
Much honour'd, much revered one, found thine eye,
O consecrated maid, more calm, more bright,
To all a happy omen! Still doth grief,
With gloom mysterious, shroud thy inner mind;
Vainly, through many a tedious year we wait
For one confiding utterance from thy breast.
Long as I've known thee in this holy place,
That look of thine hath ever made me shudder;
And, as with iron bands, thy soul remains
Lock'd in the deep recesses of thy breast.

IPHIGENIA.

As doth become the exile and the orphan.

ARKAS.

Dost thou then here seem exil'd and an orphan?

IPHIGENIA.

Can foreign scenes our fatherland replace?

ARKAS.

Thy fatherland is foreign now to thee.

IPHIGENIA.

Hence is it that my bleeding heart ne'er heals.
In early youth, when first my soul, in love,
Held father, mother, brethren fondly twin'd,
A group of tender germs, in union sweet,
We sprang in beauty from the parent stem,
And heavenward grew; alas, a foreign curse

Then seized and sever'd me from those I loved,
And wrench'd with iron grasp the beauteous bands.
It vanish'd then, the fairest charm of youth,
The simple gladness of life's early dawn;
Though sav'd, I was a shadow of myself,
And life's fresh joyance blooms in me no more.

ARKAS.

If thou wilt ever call thyself unblest,
I must accuse thee of ingratitude.

IPHIGENIA.

Thanks have you ever.

ARKAS.

Not the honest thanks

Which prompt the heart to offices of love;
The joyous glance, revealing to the host
A grateful spirit, with its lot content.
When thee a deep mysterious destiny
Brought to this sacred fane, long years ago.
To greet thee, as a treasure sent from heaven,
With reverence and affection, Thoas came.
Benign and friendly was this shore to thee,
To every stranger else with horror fraught,
For, till thy coming, none e'er trod our realm
But fell, according to an ancient rite,
A bloody victim at Diana's shrine.

IPHIGENIA.

Freely to breathe alone is not to live.
Say, is it life, within this holy fane,
Like a poor ghost around its sepulchre
To linger out my days? Or call you that
A life of conscious happiness and joy,
When every hour, dream'd listlessly away,
Still leadeth onward to those gloomy days,
Which the sad troop of the departed spend
In self-forgetfulness on Lethe's shore?
A useless life is but an early death;
This woman's destiny hath still been mine.

ARKAS.

I can forgive, though I must needs deplore,
The noble pride which underrates itself;
It robs thee of the happiness of life.
But hast thou, since thy coming here, done naught?
Who hath the monarch's gloomy temper cheered?
Who hath with gentle eloquence annull'd,
From year to year, the usage of our sires,
By which, a victim at Diana's shrine,
Each stranger perish'd, thus from certain death
Sending so oft the rescued captive home?
Hath not Diana, harbouring no revenge
For this suspension of her bloody rites,
In richest measure heard thy gentle prayer?
On joyous pinions o'er the advancing host,
Doth not triumphant conquest proudly soar?
And feels not every one a happier lot,
Since Thoas, who so long hath guided us
With wisdom and with valour, sway'd by thee.
The joy of mild benignity approves,
Which leads him to relax the rigid claims
Of mute submission? Call thyself useless! Thou,
When from thy being o'er a thousand hearts,
A healing balsam flows? when to a race,
To whom a god consign'd thee, thou dost prove
A fountain of perpetual happiness,
And from this dire inhospitable coast,
Dost to the stranger grant a safe return?

IPHIGENIA.

The little done doth vanish to the wind,
Which forward sees how much remains to do.

ARKAS.

Him dost thou praise, who underrates his deeds?

IPHIGENIA.

Who weigheth his own deeds is justly blam'd.

ARKAS.

He too, real worth too proudly who condemns,
As who, too vainly, spurious worth o'er-rateth.
Trust me, and heed the counsel of a man
With honest zeal devoted to thy service:
When Thoas comes to-day to speak with thee,
Lend to his purposed words a gracious ear.

IPHIGENIA.

Thy well-intention'd counsel troubles me:
His offer I have ever sought to shun.

ARKAS.

Thy duty and thy interest calmly weigh.
Sithence King Thoas lost his son and heir,
Among his followers he trusts but few,
And trusts those few no more as formerly.
With jealous eye he views each noble's son
As the successor of his realm, he dreads
A solitary, helpless age—perchance
Sudden rebellion and untimely death.
A Scythian studies not the rules of speech,
And least of all the king. He who is used
To act and to command, knows not the art,
From far, with subtle tact, to guide discourse:
Through many windings to its destin'd goal.
Thwart not his purpose by a cold refusal,
By an intended misconception. Meet,
With gracious mien, half-way the royal wish.

IPHIGENIA.

Shall I then speed the doom that threatens me?

ARKAS.

His gracious offer canst thou call a threat?

IPHIGENIA.

Tis the most terrible of all to me.

ARKAS.

For his affection grant him confidence.

IPHIGENIA.

If he will first redeem my soul from fear.

ARKAS.

Why dost thou hide from him thy origin?

IPHIGENIA.

A priestess secrecy doth well become.

ARKAS.

Naught to a monarch should a secret be;
And, though he doth not seek to fathom thine,
His noble nature feels, ay, deeply feels,
That thou with care dost hide thyself from him.

IPHIGENIA.

Ill-will and anger harbours he against me?

ARKAS.

Almost it seems so. True, he speaks not of thee,
But casual words have taught me that the wish
Thee to possess hath firmly seiz'd his soul;
O leave him not a prey unto himself,
Lest his displeasure, rip'ning in his breast,
Should work thee woe, so with repentance thou
Too late my faithful counsel shalt recall.

IPHIGENIA.

How! doth the monarch purpose what no man
Of noble mind, who loves his honest name,
Whose bosom reverence for the gods restrains,
Would ever think of? Will he force employ
To drag me from the altar to his bed?
Then will I call the gods, and chiefly thee,
Diana, goddess resolute, to aid me;
Thyself a virgin, wilt a virgin shield,
And to thy priestess gladly render aid.

ARKAS.

Be tranquil! Passion, and youth's fiery blood
Impel not Thoas rashly to commit
A deed so lawless. In his present mood,
I fear from him another harsh resolve,
Which (for his soul is steadfast and unmov'd)
He then will execute without delay.
Therefore I pray thee, canst thou grant no more,
At least be grateful—give thy confidence.

IPHIGENIA.

Oh tell me what is further known to thee.

ARKAS.

Learn it from him. I see the king approach:
Him thou dost honour, thine own heart enjoins
To meet him kindly and with confidence.
A man of noble mind may oft be led
By woman's gentle word.

IPHIGENIA (*alone*).

How to observe
His faithful counsel see I not in sooth.
But willingly the duty I perform
Of giving thanks for benefits receiv'd,
And much I wish that to the king my lips
With truth could utter what would please his ear.

SCENE III.

IPHIGENIA, THOAS.

IPHIGENIA.

Her royal gifts the goddess shower on thee
Imparting conquest, wealth, and high renown
Dominion, and the welfare of thy house,
With the fulfilment of each pious wish,
That thou, whose sway for multitudes provides,
Thyself may'st be supreme in happiness!

THOAS.

Contented were I with my people's praise;
My conquests others more than I enjoy.
Oh! be he king or subject, he's most blest,
Whose happiness is centred in his home.
My deep affliction thou didst share with me
What time, in war's encounter, the fell sword
Tore from my side my last, my dearest son;
So long as fierce revenge possessed my heart,
I did not feel my dwelling's dreary void;
But now, returning home, my rage appeas'd,
Their kingdom wasted, and my son aveng'd,
I find there nothing left to comfort me.
The glad obedience I was wont to see
Kindling in every eye, is smother'd now
In discontent and gloom; each, pondering, weighs
The changes which a future day may bring,
And serves the childless king, because he must.
To-day I come within this sacred fane,
Which I have often enter'd to implore
And thank the gods for conquest. In my breast
I bear an old and fondly-cherish'd wish,
To which methinks thou canst not be a stranger;
I hope, a blessing to myself and realm,
To lead thee to my dwelling as my bride.

IPHIGENIA.

Too great thine offer, king, to one unknown;
Abash'd the fugitive before thee stands,
Who on this shore sought only what thou gavest,
Safety and peace.

THOAS.

Thus still to shroud thyself
From me, as from the lowest, in the veil
Of mystery which wrapp'd thy coming here,
Would in no country be deem'd just or right.
Strangers this shore appall'd; 'twas so ordain'd,
Alike by law and stern necessity.
From thee alone—a kindly welcom'd guest,
Who hast enjoy'd each hallow'd privilege,

And spent thy days in freedom unrestrain'd—
From thee I hop'd that confidence to gain
Which every faithful host may justly claim.

IPHIGENIA.

If I conceal'd, O king, my name, my race,
It was embarrassment, and not mistrust.
For didst thou know who stands before thee now,
And what accursed head thine arm protects,
Strange horror would possess thy mighty heart;
And, far from wishing me to share thy throne,
Thou, ere the time appointed, from thy realm
Wouldst banish me; wouldst thrust me forth, perchance
Before a glad reunion with my friends
And period to my wand'rings is ordain'd,
To meet that sorrow, which in every clime,
With cold, inhospitable, fearful hand,
Awaits the outcast, exil'd from his home.

THAOS.

Whate'er respecting thee the gods decree,
Whate'er their doom for thee and for thy house,
Since thou hast dwelt amongst us, and enjoy'd
The privilege the pious stranger claims,
To me hath fail'd no blessing sent from heaven;
And to persuade me, that protecting thee
I shield a guilty head, were hard indeed.

IPHIGENIA.

Thy bounty, not the guest, draws blessings down.

THAOS.

The kindness shown the wicked is not blest.
End then thy silence, priestess; not unjust
Is he who doth demand it. In my hands
The goddess placed thee; thou hast been to me
As sacred as to her, and her behest
Shall for the future also be my law:
If thou canst hope in safety to return
Back to thy kindred, I renounce my claims:
But is thy homeward path for ever closed—

Or doth thy race in hopeless exile rove,
Or lie extinguish'd by some mighty woe—
Then may I claim thee by more laws than one.
Speak openly, thou know'st I keep my word.

IPHIGENIA.

Its ancient bands reluctantly my tongue
Doth loose, a long-hid secret to divulge;
For once imparted, it resumes no more
The safe asylum of the inmost heart,
But thenceforth, as the powers above decree,
Doth work its ministry of weal or woe.
Attend! I issue from the Titan's race.

THOAS.

A word momentous calmly hast thou spoken.
Him nam'st thou ancestor whom all the world
Knows as a sometime favourite of the gods?
Is it that Tantalus, whom Jove himself
Drew to his council and his social board?
On whose experienc'd words, with wisdom fraught,
As on the language of an oracle,
E'en gods delighted hung?

IPHIGENIA.

'Tis even he;
But the immortal gods with mortal men
Should not, on equal terms, hold intercourse;
For all too feeble is the human race,
Not to grow dizzy on unwonted heights.
Ignoble was he not, and no betrayer;
To be the Thunderer's slave, he was too great;
To be his friend and comrade,—but a man.
His crime was human, and their doom severe;
For poets sing, that treachery and pride
Did from Jove's table hurl him headlong down
To grovel in the depths of Tartarus.
Alas, and his whole race must bear their hate.

THOAS.

Bear they their own guilt, or their ancestor's?

IPHIGENIA.

The Titan's mighty breast and nervous frame
Was his descendants' certain heritage;
But round their brow Jove forg'd a band of brass.
Wisdom and patience, prudence and restraint,
He from their gloomy, fearful eye conceal'd;
In them each passion grew to savage rage,
And headlong rush'd with violence uncheck'd.
Already Pelops, Tantalus' loved son,
Mighty of will, obtained his beauteous bride,
Hippodamia, child of Ænomaus,
Through treachery and murder; she ere long,
To glad her consort's heart, bare him too sons,
Thyest and Atreus. They with envy marked
The ever-growing love their father bare
To his first-born, sprung from another union.
Hate leagued the pair, and secretly they wrought,
In fratricide, the first dread crime. The sire
Hippodamia held as murderess,
With savage rage he claim'd from her his son,
And she in terror did destroy herself—

THOAS.

Thou'rt silent? Pause not in thy narrative;
Repent not of thy confidence—say on!

IPHIGENIA.

How blest is he who his progenitors
With pride remembers, to the listener tells
The story of their greatness, of their deeds,
And, silently rejoicing, sees himself
The latest link of this illustrious chain!
For seldom does the self-same stock produce
The monster and the demigod: a line
Or good or evil ushers in, at last,
The glory or the terror of the world.—
After the death of Pelops, his two sons
Rul'd o'er the city with divided sway.
But such an union could not long endure.

His brother's honour first Thyestes wounds.
In vengeance Atreus drove him from the realm.
Thyestes, planning horrors, long before
Had stealthily procur'd his brother's son,
Whom he in secret nurtur'd as his own.
Revenge and fury in his breast he pour'd,
Then to the royal city sent him forth,
That in his uncle he might slay his sire.
The meditated murder was disclos'd,
And by the king most cruelly aveng'd,
Who slaughter'd as he thought, his brother's son.
Too late he learn'd whose dying tortures met
His drunken gaze; and seeking to assuage
The insatiate vengeance that possess'd his soul,
He plann'd a deed unheard of. He assum'd
A friendly tone, seem'd reconcil'd, pleas'd,
And lur'd his brother, with his children twain,
Back to his kingdom; these he seiz'd and slew;
Then plac'd the loathsome and abhorrent food
At his first meal before the unconscious sire.
And when Thyestes had his hunger still'd
With his own flesh, a sadness seiz'd his soul;
He for his children ask'd,—their steps, their voice
Fancied he heard already at the door;
And Atreus, grinning with malicious joy,
Threw in the members of the slaughter'd boys.—
Shudd'ring, O king, thou dost avert thy face:
So did the sun his radiant visage hide,
And swerve his chariot from the eternal path.
These, monarch, are thy priestess' ancestors,
And many a dreadful fate of mortal doom,
And many a deed of the bewilder'd brain,
Dark night doth cover with her sable wing,
Or shroud in gloomy twilight.

THOAS.

Hidden there
Let them abide. A truce to horror now,
And tell me by what miracle thou sprangest
From race so savage.

IPHIGENIA.

Atræus' eldest son
Was Agamemnon; he, O king, my sire :
But I may say with truth, that, from a child,
In him the model of a perfect man
I witness'd ever. Clytemnestra bore
To him, myself, the firstling of their love,
Electra then. Peaceful the monarch rul'd,
And to the house of Tantalus was given
A long-withheld repose. A son alone
Was wanting to complete my parents' bliss;
Scarce was this wish fulfill'd, and young Orestes,
The household's darling, with his sisters grew,
When new misfortunes vex'd our ancient house.
To you hath come the rumour of the war,
Which, to avenge the fairest woman's wrongs,
The force united of the Grecian kings
Round Ilion's walls encamp'd. Whether the town
Was humbled, and achieved their great revenge,
I have not heard. My father led the host.
In Aulis vainly for a favouring gale
They waited; for, enrag'd against their chief,
Diana stay'd their progress, and requir'd,
Through Chalcas' voice, the monarch's eldest daughter.
They lured me with my mother to the camp,
They dragged me to the altar, and this head
There to the goddess doomed.—She was appeased;
She did not wish my blood, and shrouded me
In a protecting cloud; within this temple
I first awakened from the dream of death;
Yes, I myself am she, Iphigenia,
Grandchild of Atræus, Agamemnon's child,
Diana's priestess, I who speak with thee.

THOAS.

I yield no higher honour or regard
To the king's daughter than the maid unknown;
Once more my first proposal I repeat;
Come follow me, and share what I possess.

IPHIGENIA.

How dare I venture such a step, O king?
Hath not the goddess who protected me
Alone a right to my devoted head?
'Twas she who chose for me this sanctuary,
Where she perchance reserves me for my sire,
By my apparent death enough chastis'd,
To be the joy and solace of his age.
Perchance my glad return is near; and how,
If I, unmindful of her purposes,
Had here attach'd myself against her will?
I ask'd a signal, did she wish my stay.

THOAS.

The signal is that still thou tarriest here.
Seek not evasively such vain pretexts.
Not many words are needed to refuse,
The *no* alone is heard by the refused.

IPHIGENIA.

Mine are not words meant only to deceive;
I have to thee my inmost heart reveal'd.
And doth no inward voice suggest to thee,
How I with yearning soul must pine to see
My father, mother, and my long-lost home?
Oh let thy vessels bear me thither, king?
That in the ancient halls, where sorrow still
In accents low doth fondly breathe my name,
Joy, as in welcome of a new-born child,
May round the columns twine the fairest wreath.
New life thou wouldst to me and mine impart.

THOAS.

Then go! Obey the promptings of thy heart;
And to the voice of reason and good counsel,
Close thou thine ear. Be quite the woman, give
To every wish the rein, that bridleless
May seize on thee, and whirl thee here and there.
When burns the fire of passion in her breast,
No sacred tie withholds her from the wretch
Who would allure her to forsake for him

A husband's or a father's guardian arms ;
Extinct within her heart its fiery glow,
The golden tongue of eloquence in vain
With words of truth and power assails her ear.

IPHIGENIA.

Remember now, O king, thy noble words !
My trust and candour wilt thou thus repay ?
Thou seem'st, methinks, prepar'd to hear the truth.

THOAS.

For this unlook'd-for answer not prepar'd.
Yet 'twas to be expected ; knew I not
That with a woman I had now to deal ?

IPHIGENIA.

Upbraid not thus, O king, our feeble sex !
Though not in dignity to match with yours,
The weapons woman wields are not ignoble.
And trust me, Thoas, in thy happiness
I have a deeper insight than thyself.
Thou thinkest, ignorant alike of both,
A closer union would augment our bliss ;
Inspir'd with confidence and honest zeal
Thou strongly urgest me to yield consent ;
And here I thank the gods, who give me strength
To shun a doom unratified by them.

THOAS.

'Tis not a god, 'tis thine own heart that speaks.

IPHIGENIA.

'Tis through the heart alone they speak to us.

THOAS.

To hear them have I not an equal right ?

IPHIGENIA.

The raging tempest drowns the still small voice.

THOAS.

This voice no doubt the priestess hears alone.

IPHIGENIA.

Before all others should the prince attend it.

THOAS.

Thy sacred office, and ancestral right
To Jove's own table, place thee with the gods
In closer union than an earth-born savage.

IPHIGENIA.

Thus must I now the confidence atone
Thyself didst wring from me!

THOAS.

I am a man.

And better 'tis we end this conference.
Hear then my last resolve. Be priestess still
Of the great goddess who selected thee;
And may she pardon me, that I from her,
Unjustly and with secret self-reproach,
Her ancient sacrifice so long withheld.
From olden time no stranger near'd our shore
But fell a victim at her sacred shrine.
But thou, with kind affection (which at times
Seem'd like a gentle daughter's tender love,
At times assum'd to my enraptur'd heart
The modest inclination of a bride),
Didst so inthral me, as with magic bonds,
That I forgot my duty. Thou didst rock
My senses in a dream: I did not hear
My people's murmurs: now they cry aloud,
Ascribing my poor son's untimely death
To this my guilt. No longer for thy sake
Will I oppose the wishes of the crowd,
Who urgently demand the sacrifice.

IPHIGENIA.

For mine own sake I ne'er desired it from thee.
Who to the gods ascribe a thirst for blood

Do misconceive their nature, and impute
To them their own inhuman dark desires.
Did not Diana snatch me from the priest,
Holding my service dearer than my death?

THOAS.

'Tis not for us, on reason's shifting grounds,
Lightly to guide and construe rites divine.
Perform thy duty; I'll accomplish mine.
Two strangers, whom in caverns of the shore
We found conceal'd, and whose arrival here
Bodes to my realm no good, are in my power.
With them thy goddess may once more resume
Her ancient, pious, long-suspended rites!
I send them here,—thy duty not unknown.

[Exit

IPHIGENIA (*alone.*)

Gracious protectress! thou hast clouds
To shelter innocence distress'd,
And from the arms of iron fate,
Gently to waft her o'er the sea,
O'er the wide earth's remotest realms,
Where'er it seemeth good to thee.
Wise art thou,—thine all-seeing eye
The future and the past surveys;
Thy glance doth o'er thy children rest,
E'en as thy light, the life of night,
Keeps o'er the earth its silent watch.
O Goddess! keep my hands from blood!
Blessing it never brings, and peace;
And still in evil hours the form
Of the chance-murder'd man appears
To fill the unwilling murderer's soul
With horrible and gloomy fears.
For fondly the Immortals view
Man's widely-scatter'd, simple race;
And the poor mortal's transient life
Gladly prolong, that he may lift
Awhile to their eternal heavens
His sympathetic joyous gaze.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

ORESTES, PYLADES.

ORESTES.

It is the path of death that now we tread:
At every step my soul grows more serene.
When I implor'd Apollo to remove
The grisly band of Furies from my side,
He seem'd, with hope-inspiring, godlike words,
To promise aid and safety in the fane
Of his lov'd sister, who o'er Tauris rules.
Thus the prophetic word fulfils itself,
That with my life shall terminate my woe.
How easy 'tis for me, whose heart is crush'd,
Whose sense is deaden'd by a hand divine,
Thus to renounce the beauteous light of day!
And must the son of Atreus not entwine
The wreath of conquest round his dying brow—
Must I, as my forefathers, as my sire,
Bleed like a victim,—an ignoble death—
So be it! Better at the altar here,
Than in a nook obscure, where kindred hands
Have spread assassination's wily net.
Yield me this brief repose, infernal Powers!
Ye, who, like loosen'd hounds, still scent the blood
Which, trickling from my feet, betrays my path.
Leave me! ere long I come to you below.
Nor you, nor I, should view the light of day.
The soft green carpet of the beauteous earth
Is no arena for unhallow'd fiends.
Below I seek you, where an equal fate
Binds all in murky, never-ending night.
Thee only, thee, my Pylades, my friend,
The guiltless partner of my crime and curse,
Thee am I loath, before thy time, to take
To yonder cheerless shore! Thy life or death
Alone awakens in me hope or fear

PYLADES.

Like thee, Orestes, I am not prepared
Downwards to wander to yon realm of shade.
I purpose still, through the entangled paths,
Which seem as they would lead to blackest night,
Again to wind our upward way to life.
Of death I think not; I observe and mark
Whether the gods may not perchance present
Means and fit moment for a joyful flight.
Dreaded or not, the stroke of death must come;
And though the priestess stood with hand uprais'd,
Prepar'd to cut our consecrated locks,
Our safety still should be my only thought;
Uplift thy soul above this weak despair;
Desponding doubts but hasten on our peril.
Apollo pledg'd to us his sacred word,
That in his sister's holy fane for thee
Were comfort, aid, and glad return prepar'd.
The words of Heaven are not equivocal,
As in despair the poor oppress'd one thinks.

ORESTES.

The mystic web of life my mother cast
Around my infant head; and so I grew
An image of my sire; and my mute look
Was aye a bitter and a keen reproof
To her and base Ægisthus. Oh, how oft,
When silently within our gloomy hall
Electra sat, and mus'd beside the fire,
Have I with anguish'd spirit climb'd her knee,
And watch'd her bitter tears with sad amaze!
Then would she tell me of our noble sire:
How much I long'd to see him—be with him!
Myself at Troy one moment fondly wish'd,
My sire's return, the next. The day arrived—

PYLADES.

Oh, of that awful hour let fiends of hell
Hold nightly converse! Of a time more fair
May the remembrance animate our hearts

To fresh heroic deeds. The gods require
On this wide earth the service of the good,
To work their pleasure. Still they count on thee;
For in thy father's train they sent thee not,
When he to Orcus went unwilling down.

ORESTES.

Would I had seized the border of his robe,
And follow'd him!

PYLADES.

They kindly cared for me
Who held thee here; for hadst thou ceased to live,
I know not what had then become of me;
Since I with thee, and for thy sake alone,
Have from my childhood liv'd, and wish to live.

ORESTES.

Remind me not of those delightful days,
When me thy home a safe asylum gave;
With fond solicitude thy noble sire
The half-nipp'd, tender flow'ret gently rear'd:
While thou, a friend and playmate always gay,
Like to a light and brilliant butterfly
Around a dusky flower, didst day by day
Around me with new life thy gambols urge,
And breathe thy joyous spirit in my soul,
Until, my cares forgetting, I with thee
Was lur'd to snatch the eager joys of youth.

PYLADES.

My very life began when thee I lov'd.

ORESTES.

Say, then thy woes began, and thou speak'st truly.
This is the sharpest sorrow of my lot,
That, like a plague-infected wretch, I bear
Death and destruction hid within my breast;
That, where I tread, e'en on the healthiest spot,
Ere long the blooming faces round betray
The anguish'd features of a ling'ring death.

PYLADES.

Were thy breath venom, I had been the first
To die, that death, Orestes. Am I not,
As ever, full of courage and of joy?
And love and courage are the spirit's wings
Wafting to noble actions.

ORESTES.

Noble actions?

Time was, when fancy painted such before us!
When oft, the game pursuing, on we roam'd
O'er hill and valley; hoping that ere long,
Like our great ancestors in heart and hand,
With club and weapon arm'd, we so might track
The robber to his den, or monster huge.
And then at twilight, by the boundless sea,
Peaceful we sat, reclin'd against each other,
The waves came dancing to our very feet,
And all before us lay the wide, wide world;
Then on a sudden one would seize his sword,
And future deeds shone round us like the stars,
Which gemm'd in countless throngs the vault of night.

PYLADES.

Endless, my friend, the projects which the soul
Burns to accomplish. We would every deed
At once perform as grandly as it shows
After long ages, when from land to land
The poet's swelling song hath roll'd it on.
It sounds so lovely what our fathers did,
When, in the silent evening shade reclin'd,
We drink it in with music's melting tones;
And what we do is, as their deeds to them,
Toilsome and incomplete!
Thus we pursue what always flies before;
We disregard the path in which we tread,
Scarce see around the footsteps of our sires,
Or heed the trace of their career on earth.
We ever hasten on to chase their shades,
Which, godlike, at a distance far remote,

On golden clouds, the mountain summits crown.
The man I prize not who esteems himself
Just as the people's breath may chance to raise him
But thou, Orestes, to the gods give thanks,
That they through thee have early done so much.

ORESTES.

When they ordain a man to noble deeds,
To shield from dire calamity his friends,
Extend his empire, or protect its bounds,
Or put to flight its ancient enemies,
Let him be grateful! For to him a god
Imparts the first, the sweetest joy of life.
Me have they doom'd to be a slaughterer,
To be an honour'd mother's murderer,
And shamefully a deed of shame avenging,
Me through their own decree they have o'erwhelm'd.
Trust me, the race of Tantalus is doom'd ;
And I, his last descendant, may not perish,
Or crown'd with honour or unstain'd by crime.

PYLADES.

The gods avenge not on the son the deeds
Done by the father. Each, or good or bad,
Of his own actions reaps the due reward.
The parents' blessing, not their curse, descends.

ORESTES.

Methinks their blessing did not lead us here.

PYLADES.

It was at least the mighty gods' decree.

ORESTES.

Then is it their decree which doth destroy us.

PYLADES.

Perform what they command, and wait the event.
Do thou Apollo's sister bear from hence,
That they at Delphi may united dwell,
There by a noble-thoughted race revered,
Thee, for this deed, the lofty pair will view

With gracious eye, and from the hateful grasp
Of the infernal Powers will rescue thee.
E'en now none dares intrude within this grove.

ORESTES.

So shall I die at least a peaceful death.

PYLADES.

Far other are my thoughts, and not unskill'd
Have I the future and the past combin'd
In quiet meditation. Long, perchance,
Hath ripen'd in the counsel of the gods
The great event. Diana yearns to leave
The savage coast of these barbarians,
Foul with their sacrifice of human blood.
We were selected for the high emprise;
To us it is assign'd, and strangely thus
We are conducted to the threshold here.

ORESTES.

My friend, with wondrous skill thou link'st thy wish
With the predestin'd purpose of the gods.

PYLADES.

Of what avail is prudence, if it fail
Heedful to mark the purposes of Heaven?
A noble man, who much hath sinn'd, some god
Doth summon to a dangerous enterprize,
Which to achieve appears impossible.
The hero conquers, and atoning serves
Mortals and gods, who thenceforth honour him.

ORESTES.

Am I foredoom'd to action and to life,
Would that a god from my distemper'd brain
Might chase this dizzy fever, which impels
My restless steps along a slipp'ry path,
Stain'd with a mother's blood, to direful death;
And pitying, dry the fountain, whence the blood,
For ever spouting from a mother's wounds,
Eternally defiles me!

PYLADES.

Wait in peace!

Thou dost increase the evil, and dost take
The office of the Furies on thyself.
Let me contrive,—be still! And when at length
The time for action claims our powers combin'd,
Then will I summon thee, and on we'll stride,
With cautious boldness to achieve the event.

ORESTES.

I hear Ulysses speak.

PYLADES.

Nay, mock me not.

Each must select the hero after whom
To climb the steep and difficult ascent
Of high Olympus. And to me it seems
That him nor stratagem nor art defiles
Who consecrates himself to noble deeds.

ORESTES.

I most esteem the brave and upright man,

PYLADES.

And therefore have I not desir'd thy counsel.
One step's already taken. From our guards
E'en now I this intelligence have gained.
A strange and godlike woman holds in check
The execution of that bloody law:
Incense, and prayer, and an unsullied heart,
These are the gifts she offers to the gods.
Rumour extols her highly, it is thought
That from the race of Amazon she springs,
And hither fled some great calamity.

ORESTES.

Her gentle sway, it seems, lost all its power
When hither came the culprit, whom the curse,
Like murky night, envelopes and pursues.
Our doom to seal, the pious thirst for blood
The ancient cruel rite again unchains:

The monarch's savage will decrees our death;
A woman cannot save when he condemns.

PYLADES.

That 'tis a woman, is a ground for hope!
A man, the very best, with cruelty
At length may so familiarize his mind,
His character through custom so transform,
That he shall come to make himself a law
Of what at first his very soul abhorr'd.
But woman doth retain the stamp of mind
She first assum'd. On her we may depend
In good or evil with more certainty.
She comes; leave us alone. I dare not tell
At once our names, nor unreserv'd confide
Our fortunes to her. Now retire awhile,
And ere she speaks with thee we'll meet again.

SCENE II.

IPHIGENIA, PYLADES.

IPHIGENIA.

Whence art thou? Stranger, speak! To me thy bearing
Stamps thee of Grecian, not of Scythian race.

(She unbinds his chains.)

The freedom that I give is dangerous;
The gods avert the doom that threatens you!

PYLADES.

Delicious music! dearly welcome tones
Of our own language in a foreign land!
With joy my captive eye once more beholds
The azure mountains of my native coast.
Oh, let this joy that I too am a Greek
Convince thee, priestess! How I need thine aid,
A moment I forget, my spirit rapt
In contemplation of so fair a vision.
If fate's dread mandate doth not seal thy lips,
From which of our illustrious races say,
Dost thou thy godlike origin derive?

IPHIGENIA.

The priestess whom the goddess hath herself
Selected and ordained, doth speak with thee.
Let that suffice: but tell me, who art thou,
And what unblest'd o'erruling destiny
Hath hither led thee with thy friend?

PYLADES.

The woe,
Whose hateful presence ever dogs our steps,
I can with ease relate. Oh, would that thou
Couldst with like ease, divine one, shed on us
One ray of cheering hope! We are from Crete,
Adrastus' sons, and I, the youngest born,
Named Cephalus; my eldest brother, he,
Laodamas. Between us stood a youth
Savage and wild, who severed e'en in sport
The joy and concord of our early youth.
Long as our father led his powers at Troy,
Passive our mother's mandate we obey'd;
But when, enrich'd with booty, he return'd,
And shortly after died, a contest fierce
Both for the kingdom and their father's wealth,
His children parted. I the eldest joined;
He slew our brother; and the Furies hence
For kindred murder dog his restless steps.
But to this savage shore the Delphian god
Hath sent us, cheer'd by hope. He bade us wait
Within his sister's consecrated fane
The blessed hand of aid. Captives we are,
And, hither brought, before thee now we stand
Ordain'd for sacrifice. My tale is told.

IPHIGENIA.

Fell Troy! Dear man, assure me of its fall.

PYLADES.

Prostrate it lies. O unto us ensure
Deliverance. The promised aid of heaven
More swiftly bring. Take pity on my brother.
O say to him a kind, a gracious word:

But spare him when thou speakest, earnestly
This I implore: for all too easily
Through joy and sorrow and through memory
Torn and distracted is his inmost being.
A feverish madness oft doth seize on him,
Yielding his spirit, beautiful and free,
A prey to furies.

IPHIGENIA.

Great as is thy woe,
Forget it, I conjure thee, for a while,
Till I am satisfied.

PYLADES.

The stately town,
Which ten long years withstood the Grecian host,
Now lies in ruins, ne'er to rise again ;
Yet many a hero's grave will oft recall
Our sad remembrance to that barbarous shore.
There lies Achilles and his noble friend.

IPHIGENIA.

So are ye godlike forms reduc'd to dust !

PYLADES.

Nor Palamede, nor Ajax, ere again
The daylight of their native land beheld.

IPHIGENIA.

He speaks not of my father, doth not name
Him with the fallen. He may yet survive !
I may behold him ! still hope on, fond heart !

PYLADES.

Yet happy are the thousands who receiv'd
Their bitter death-blow from a hostile hand !
For terror wild, and end most tragical,
Some hostile, angry deity prepar'd,
Instead of triumph, for the home-returning.
Do human voices never reach this shore ?
Far as their sound extends, they bear the fame
Of deeds unparallel'd. And is the woe
Which fills Mycene's halls with ceaseless sighs

To thee a secret still?—And know'st thou not
That Clytemnestra, with Ægisthus' aid,
Her royal consort artfully ensnar'd,
And murder'd on the day of his return?—
The monarch's house thou honourest! I perceive
Thy breast with tidings vainly doth contend
Fraught with such monstrous and unlook'd for woe.
Art thou the daughter of a friend? art born
Within the circuit of Mycene's walls?
Conceal it not, nor call me to account
That here the horrid crime I first announce.

IPHIGENIA.

Proceed, and tell me how the deed was done.

PYLADES.

The day of his return, as from the bath
Arose the monarch, tranquil and refresh'd,
His robe demanding from his consort's hand,
A tangled garment, complicate with folds,
She o'er his shoulders flung and noble head;
And when, as from a net, he vainly strove
To extricate himself, the traitor, base
Ægisthus, smote him, and envelop'd thus
Great Agamemnon sought the shades below.

IPHIGENIA.

And what reward receiv'd the base accomplice?

PYLADES.

A queen and kingdom he possess'd already.

IPHIGENIA.

Base passion prompted then the deed of shame?

PYLADES.

And feelings, cherish'd long, of deep revenge.

IPHIGENIA.

How had the monarch injured Clytemnestra?

PYLADES.

By such a dreadful deed, that if on earth
Aught could exculpate murder, it were this.
To Aulis he allur'd her, when the fleet
With unpropitious winds the goddess stay'd ;
And there, a victim at Diana's shrine,
The monarch, for the welfare of the Greeks,
Her eldest daughter doomed, Iphigenia.
And this, so rumour saith, within her heart
Planted such deep abhorrence that forthwith
She to Ægisthus hath resigned herself,
And round her husband flung the web of death.

IPHIGENIA (*veiling herself*).

It is enough ! Thou wilt again behold me.

PYLADES (*alone*).

The fortune of this royal house, it seems,
Doth move her deeply. Whosoe'er she be,
She must herself have known the monarch well ;—
For our good fortune, from a noble house,
She hath been sold to bondage. Peace, my heart !
And let us steer our course with prudent zeal
Toward the star of hope which gleams upon us.

ACT III.

SCENE I.

IPHIGENIA, ORESTES.

IPHIGENIA.

Unhappy man, I only loose thy bonds
In token of a still severer doom.
The freedom which the sanctuary imparts,
Like the last life-gleam o'er the dying face,
But heralds death. I cannot, dare not say
Your doom is hopeless ; for, with murderous hand,
Could I inflict the fatal blow myself?

And while I here am priestess of Diana,
None, be he who he may, dare touch your heads.
But the incensed king, should I refuse
Compliance with the rites himself enjoin'd,
Will choose another virgin from my train
As my successor. Then, alas! with naught,
Save ardent wishes, can I succour you.
Much honoured countrymen! The humblest slave,
Who had but near'd our sacred household hearth,
Is dearly welcome in a foreign land;
How with proportion'd joy and blessing, then,
Shall I receive the man who doth recall
The image of the heroes, whom I learn'd
To honour from my parents, and who cheers
My inmost heart with flatt'ring gleams of hope!

ORESTES.

Does prudent forethought prompt thee to conceal
Thy name and race? or may I hope to know
Who, like a heavenly vision, meets me thus?

IPHIGENIA.

Yes, thou shalt know me. Now conclude the tale
Of which thy brother only told me half:
Relate their end, who coming home from Troy,
On their own threshold met a doom severe
And most unlook'd for. Young I was in sooth
When first conducted to this foreign shore,
Yet well I recollect the timid glance
Of wonder and amazement which I cast
On those heroic forms. When they went forth
It seem'd as though Olympus had sent down
The glorious figures of a bygone world,
To frighten Ilion; and above them all,
Great Agamemnon tower'd pre-eminent!
Oh tell me! Fell the hero in his home,
Through Clytemnestra's and Ægisthus' wiles?

ORESTES.

He fell!

IPHIGENIA.

Unblest Mycene! Thus the sons
Of Tantalus, with barbarous hands, have sown
Curse upon curse; and, as the shaken weed
Scatters around a thousand poison-seeds,
So they assassins ceaseless generate,
Their children's children ruthless to destroy,—
Now tell the remnant of thy brother's tale,
Which horror darkly hid from me before.
How did the last descendant of the race,—
The gentle child, to whom the Gods assign'd
The office of avenger,—how did he
Escape that day of blood? Did equal fate
Around Orestes throw Avernus' net?
Say, was he saved? and is he still alive?
And lives Electra, too?

ORESTES.

They both survive.

IPHIGENIA.

Golden Apollo, lend thy choicest beams!
Lay them an offering at the throne of Jove!
For I am poor and dumb.

ORESTES.

If social bonds
Or ties more close connect thee with this house.
As this thy rapturous joy betrayeth to me,
O then rein in thy heart and hold it fast!
For insupportable the sudden plunge
From happiness to sorrow's gloomy depth.
Thou knowest only Agamemnon's death.

IPHIGENIA.

And is not this intelligence enough?

ORESTES.

Half of the horror only hast thou heard.

IPHIGENIA.

What should I fear? Oreste, Electra live.

ORESTES.

And fearest thou for Clytemnestra naught?

IPHIGENIA.

Her, neither hope nor fear have power to save.

ORESTES.

She to the land of hope hath bid farewell.

IPHIGENIA.

Did her repentant hand shed her own blood?

ORESTES.

Not so; yet her own blood inflicted death.

IPHIGENIA.

More plainly speak, nor leave me in suspense.
Uncertainty around my anxious head
Her dusky, thousand-folded pinion waves.

ORESTES.

Have then the powers above selected me
To be the herald of a dreadful deed,
Which in the drear and soundless realms of night
I fain would hide for ever? 'Gainst my will
Thy gentle voice constrains me; it demands,
And shall receive, a tale of direst woe.
Electra, on the day when fell her sire,
Her brother from impending doom conceal'd;
Him Strophius, his father's relative,
Receiv'd with kindest care, and rear'd him up
With his own son, named Pylades, who soon
Around the stranger twin'd love's fairest bonds.
And as they grew, within their inmost souls
There sprang the burning longing to revenge
The monarch's death. Unlook'd for, and disguis'd,
They reach Mycene, feigning to have brought
The mournful tidings of Orestes' death,
Together with his ashes. Them the queen
Gladly receives. Within the house they enter;

Orestes to Electra shows himself :
She fans the fires of vengeance into flame,
Which in the sacred presence of a mother
Had burn'd more dimly. Silently she leads
Her brother to the spot where fell their sire ;
Where lurid blood-marks, on the oft-wash'd floor,
With pallid streaks, anticipate revenge.
With fiery eloquence she pictured forth
Each circumstance of that atrocious deed,—
Her own oppress'd and miserable life,
The prosperous traitor's insolent demeanour,
The perils threat'ning Agamemnon's race
From her who had become their stepmother.—
Then in his hand the ancient dagger thrust,
Which often in the house of Tantalus
With savage fury rag'd,—and by her son
Was Clytemnestra slain.

IPHIGENIA.

Immortal powers !

Whose pure and blest existence glides away
'Mid ever shifting clouds, me have ye kept
So many years secluded from the world,
Retain'd me near yourselves, consign'd to me
The childlike task to feed the sacred fire,
And taught my spirit, like the hallow'd flame,
With never-clouded brightness to aspire
To your pure mansions,—but at length to feel
With keener woe the horror of my house ?
O tell me of the poor unfortunate !
Speak of Orestes !

ORESTES.

O could I speak to tell thee of his death !
Forth from the slain one's spouting blood arose
His mother's ghost ;
And to the ancient daughters of the night
Cries,—“ Let him not escape,—the matricide !
Pursue the victim, dedicate to you ! ”
They hear, and glare around with hollow eyes,
Like greedy eagles. In their murky dens
They stir themselves, and from the corners creep

Their comrades, dire Remorse and pallid Fear;
Before them fumes a mist of Acheron;
Perplexingly around the murderer's brow
The eternal contemplation of the past
Rolls in its cloudy circles. Once again
The grisly band, commission'd to destroy,
Pollute earth's beautiful and heaven-sown fields,
From which an ancient curse had banish'd them.
Their rapid feet the fugitive pursue;
They only pause to start a wilder fear.

IPHIGENIA.

Unhappy one; thy lot resembles his,
Thou feel'st what he, poor fugitive, must suffer.

ORESTES.

What say'st thou? why presume my fate like his?

IPHIGENIA.

A brother's murder weighs upon thy soul;
Thy younger brother told the mournful tale.

ORESTES.

I cannot suffer that thy noble soul
Should by a word of falsehood be deceived.
In cunning rich and practised in deceit
A web ensnaring let the stranger weave
To snare the stranger's feet; between us twain
Be truth!
I am Orestes! and this guilty head
Is stooping to the tomb, and covets death;
It will be welcome now in any shape.
Whoe'er thou art, for thee and for my friend
I wish deliverance;—I desire it not.
Thou seem'st to linger here against thy will;
Contrive some means of flight, and leave me here:
My lifeless corpse hurl'd headlong from the rock,
My blood shall mingle with the dashing waves,
And bring a curse upon this barbarous shore!
Return together home to lovely Greece,
With joy a new existence to commence. (*ORESTES retires.*)

IPHIGENIA.

At length Fulfilment, fairest child of Jove,
Thou dost descend upon me from on high !
How vast thine image ! scarce my straining eye
Can reach thy hands, which, fill'd with golden fruit
And wreaths of blessing, from Olympus' height
Shower treasures down. As by his bounteous gifts
We recognize the monarch (for what seems
To thousands opulence, is naught to him),
So you, ye heavenly Powers, are also known
By bounty long withheld, and wisely plann'd.
Ye only know what things are good for us ;
Ye view the future's wide-extended realm,
While from our eye a dim or starry veil
The prospect shrouds. Calmly ye hear our prayers,
When we like children sue for greater speed.
Not immature ye pluck heaven's golden fruit ;
And woe to him, who with impatient hand,
His date of joy forestalling, gathers death.
Let not this long-awaited happiness,
Which yet my heart hath scarcely realiz'd,
Like to the shadow of departed friends,
Glide vainly by with triple sorrow fraught !

ORESTES (*returning*).

Dost thou for Pylades and for thyself
Implore the gods, blend not my name with yours ;
Thou wilt not save the wretch whom thou wouldst join,
But will participate his curse and woe.

IPHIGENIA.

My destiny is firmly bound to thine.

ORESTES.

No, say not so : alone and unattended
Let me descend to Hades. Though thou shouldst
In thine own veil enwrap the guilty one,
Thou couldst not shroud him from his wakeful foes ;
And e'en thy sacred presence, heavenly maid,
But driveth them aside and scares them not.

With brazen impious feet they dare not tread
Within the precincts of this sacred grove :
Yet in the distance, ever and anon,
I hear their horrid laughter, like the howl
Of famish'd wolves, beneath the tree wherein
The traveller hides. Without, encamp'd they lie,
And should I quit this consecrated grove,
Shaking their serpent locks, they would arise,
And, raising clouds of dust on every side,
Ceaseless pursue their miserable prey.

IPHIGENIA.

Orestes, canst thou hear a friendly word ?

ORESTES.

Reserve it for one favour'd by the gods.

IPHIGENIA.

To thee they give anew the light of hope.

ORESTES.

Through clouds and smoke I see the feeble gleam
Of the death-stream which lights me down to hell.

IPHIGENIA.

Hast thou one sister only, thy Electra ?

ORESTES.

I knew but one : yet her kind destiny,
Which seemed to us so terrible, betimes
Removed an elder sister from the woe
Which o'er the house of Pelops aye impends.
O cease thy questions, nor thus league thyself
With the Erinnys ; still they blow away,
With fiendish joy, the ashes from my soul,
Lest the last embers of the fiery brand
The fatal heritage of Pelops' house,
Should there be quenched. Must then the fire for aye,
Deliberately kindled and supplied
With hellish sulphur, sear my tortured soul ?

IPHIGENIA.

I scatter fragrant incense in the flame.
O let the pure, the gentle breath of love,
Low murmuring, cool thy bosom's fiery glow.
Orestes, fondly lov'd,—canst thou not hear me?
Hath the terrific Furies' grisly band
Dried up the blood of life within thy veins?
Creeps there, as from the Gorgon's direful head,
A petrifying charm through all thy limbs?
With hollow accents from a mother's blood,
If voices call thee to the shades below,
May not a sister's word with blessing rife
Call from Olympus' height help-rendering gods?

ORESTES.

She calls! she calls!—Dost thou desire my doom?
Is there a Fury shrouded in thy form?
Who art thou, that thy voice thus horribly
Can harrow up my bosom's inmost depths?

IPHIGENIA.

Thine inmost heart reveals it. I am she,—
Iphigenia,—look on me, Orestes!

ORESTES.

Thou!

IPHIGENIA.

My own brother!

ORESTES.

Hence, away, begone!
I counsel thee, touch not these fatal locks!
As from Creusa's bridal robe, from me
An inextinguishable fire is kindled.
Leave me! Like Hercules, a death of shame,
Unworthy wretch, locked in myself, I'll die!

IPHIGENIA.

Thou shalt not perish! Would that I might hear
One quiet word from thee! dispel my doubts,
Make sure the bliss I have implored so long.

A wheel of joy and sorrow in my heart,
Ceaseless revolves. I from a man unknown
With horror turn; but with resistless might
My inmost heart impels me to my brother.

ORESTES.

Is this Lyæus' temple? Doth the glow
Of holy rage unbridled thus possess
The sacred priestess?

IPHIGENIA.

Hear me, oh, look up!
See how my heart, which hath been closed so long
Doth open to the bliss of seeing thee,
The dearest treasure that the world contains,—
Of falling on thy neck, and folding thee
Within my longing arms, which have till now
Met the embraces of the empty wind.
Do not repulse me,—the eternal spring,
Whose crystal waters from Parnassus flow,
Bounds not more gaily on from rock to rock,
Down to the golden vale, than from my heart
The waters of affection freely gush,
And round me form a circling sea of bliss.
Orestes! O my brother!

ORESTES.

Lovely nymph!
Nor thy caresses, nor thyself I trust;
Diana claims attendants more severe,
And doth avenge her desecrated fane.
Remove thy circling arm! Wilt thou indeed
Safety and love upon a youth bestow,
And fondly tender him earth's fairest joy?
Unto my friend, more worthy than myself,
Impart thy favours; 'mong yon rocks he roves.
Go, seek him; guide him hence, and heed not me.

IPHIGENIA.

Brother, command thyself, and better know
Thy sister, newly found! Misconstrue not

Her pure and heavenly rapture, blaming it
As lustful heat unbridled. O ye gods,
Remove delusion from his rigid gaze,
Lest that this moment, fraught with bliss supreme,
Should make us trebly wretched! She is here,
Thine own, thy long-lost sister! From the altar
The goddess rescued me, and placed me here,
Secure within her consecrated fane—
A captive thou, prepared for sacrifice,
And findest here a sister in the priestess.

ORESTES.

Unblessèd one! So may the radiant sun
The final horror of our house behold!
Is not Electra here? That she with us
May also perish, nor her life prolong
For heavier destiny and direr woe.
'Tis well,—I follow, priestess! Fratricide
Is an old custom of our ancient house;
And you, ye gods, I thank, that ye resolve
Childless to root me hence. Thee let me counsel
To view too fondly neither sun nor stars.
Come, follow to the gloomy realms below!
As dragons, gender'd in the sulphur pool,
Swallow each other with voracious rage,
So our accursed race destroys itself.
Childless and guiltless come below with me!
There's pity in thy look! oh, gaze not so,—
'Twas with such looks that Clytemnestra sought
An entrance to her son Orestes' heart,
And yet his uprais'd arm her bosom pierc'd.
His mother fell!—Appear, indignant shade!
Within the circle step, ye fiends of hell,
Be present at the welcome spectacle,
The last, most horrible that ye prepare!
Nor hate, nor vengeance whets the poniard now;
A loving sister is constrain'd to deal
The fatal blow. Weep not! Thou hast no guilt.
From earliest infancy I naught have lov'd,
As thee I could have lov'd, my sister. Come,

The weapon raise, spare not, this bosom rend,
And make an outlet for its boiling streams!

(He sinks exhausted.)

IPHIGENIA.

Alone I cannot bear this bliss and woe.
Where art thou, Pylades? Thine aid I need.

(IPHIGENIA retires.)

SCENE II.

ORESTES *(recovering from his swoon and standing up)*.

Give yet another! reach from Lethe's stream
The last reviving draught of cool refreshment!
Soon shall its waters in my bosom still
Life's fitful fever; and my spirit then
Adown oblivion's stream shall glide to you,
Ye spirits shrouded in eternal mist.
With tranquil pleasure in your deep repose
A weary son of earth may lave his soul!—
What whisp'ring sounds pervade the dreary grove?
What hollow murmurs haunt its twilight gloom?—
They gather round to view the stranger guest!
Who are yon troop in high communion met,
Like an assembled family of princes?
They mingle peacefully, of every age,
Of either sex: godlike, of kindred mould,
Appear the gliding figures. Yes, 'tis they,
The fathers of my race! With Atreus,
In friendly converse glides Thyestes' shade,
And children playfully around them sport.
Is there no enmity among you now?
And is revenge extinguish'd with the sun?
So am I also welcome, and may hope
To mingle in your solemn company.
Welcome, my sires! Orestes bids you hail!
The seed that ye have sow'd, that hath he reap'd.
Laden with curses he descends to you.
But burdens here are lighter far to bear.
Receive him, oh, receive him in your circle!
Thee, Atreus, I revere, and thee, Thyestes:
Here all are free from enmity and hate.—

Show me my father, whom I only once
In life beheld.—Art thou my father, thou,
My mother leading thus familiarly?
Dares Clytemnestra reach her hand to thee?
Then may Orestes also draw near her,
And say, Behold thy son!—My ancestors,
Behold your son, and bid him welcome here.
Among the sons of ancient Tantalus,
A kind salute on earth was murder's watchword,
And all their joys commence beyond the grave.
Ye welcome me! Ye bid me join your circle!
Oh, lead me to my honour'd ancestor!
Where is our aged sire? Let me behold
The dear, the venerable head of him
Who with the immortal gods in council sat.
Ye seem to shudder and to turn away!
What may this mean? Suffers the godlike man?
Alas! the mighty gods, with ruthless hate,
To his heroic breast, with brazen chains,
Have cruel pangs indissolubly bound.

SCENE III.

ORESTES, IPHIGENIA, PYLADES.

ORESTES.

How! Are ye come already here below?
Welcome, my sister! Still Electra fails;
O that some kindly god, with gentle arrow,
Her too, full speedily, would downward send!
Thee, hapless friend, I must compassionate!
Come with me! Come! To Pluto's gloomy throne,
There to salute our hosts like stranger guests.

IPHIGENIA.

Celestial pair, who from the realms above
By night and day shed down the beauteous light
To cheer mankind, but who may not illumine
Departed spirits, save a mortal pair!
A brother's and a sister's anguish pity!
For thou, Diana, lov'st thy gentle brother

Beyond what earth and heaven can offer thee ;
And dost, with quiet yearning, ever turn
Thy virgin face to his eternal light.
Let not my only brother, found so late,
Rave in the darkness of insanity !
And is thy will, when thou didst here conceal me,
At length fulfill'd,—wouldst thou to me through him
To him through me, thy gracious aid extend,—
Oh, free him from the fetters of this curse,
Lest vainly pass the precious hours of safety.

PYLADES.

Dost thou not not know us, and this sacred grove,
And this blest light, which shines not on the dead ?
Dost thou not feel thy sister and thy friend,
Who hold thee living in their firm embrace ?
Us firmly grasp ; we are not empty shades.
Mark well my words ! Collect thy scatter'd thoughts !
Attend ! Each moment is of priceless worth,
And our return hangs on a slender thread,
Which, as it seems, some gracious fate doth spin.

ORESTES (*to IPHIGENIA.*)

My sister, let me for the first time taste,
With open heart, pure joy within thine arms !
Ye gods, who charge the heavy clouds with dread,
And sternly gracious send the long-sought rain
With thunder and the rush of mighty winds,
A horrid deluge on the trembling earth ;
Yet dissipate at length man's dread suspense,
Exchanging timid wonder's anxious gaze
For grateful looks and joyous songs of praise,
When in each sparkling drop which gems the leaves,
Apollo, thousand-fold, reflects his beam,
And Iris colours with a magic hand
The dusty texture of the parting clouds ;
Oh, let me also in my sister's arms,
And on the bosom of my friend, enjoy
With grateful thanks the bliss ye now bestow ;
My heart assures me that your curses cease.
The dread Eumenides at length retire,

The brazen gates of Tartarus I hear
Behind them closing with a thunderous clang.
A quick'ning odour from the earth ascends,
Inviting me to chase, upon its plains,
The joys of life and deeds of high emprise.

PYLADES.

Lose not the moments which are limited !
The favouring gale, which swells our parting sail,
Must to Olympus waft our perfect joy.
Quick counsel and resolve the time demands.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

IPHIGENIA.

When the Powers on high decree
For a feeble child of earth
Dire perplexity and woe,
And his spirit doom to pass
With tumult wild from joy to grief,
And back again from grief to joy,
In fearful alternation ;
They in mercy then provide,
In the precincts of his home,
Or upon the distant shore,
That to him may never fail
Ready help in hours of need,
A tranquil, faithful friend.
Oh, bless, ye heavenly powers, our Pylades,
And whatsoever he may undertake !
He is in fight the vigorous arm of youth,
And his the thoughtful eye of age in counsel ;
For tranquil is his soul ; he guardeth there
Of calm a sacred and exhaustless dower,
And from its depths, in rich supply, outpours
Comfort and counsel for the sore distressed.
He tore me from my brother, upon whom,

With fond amaze, I gaz'd and gaz'd again ;
I could not realize my happiness,
Nor loose him from my arms, and heeded not
The danger's near approach that threatens us.
To execute their project of escape,
They hasten to the sea, where in a bay
Their comrades in the vessel lie conceal'd
Waiting a signal. Me they have supplied
With artful answers, should the monarch send
To urge the sacrifice. Alas ! I see
I must consent to follow like a child,
I have not learn'd deception, nor the art
To gain with crafty wiles my purposes.
Detested falsehood ! it doth not relieve
The breast like words of truth : it comforts not,
But is a torment in the forger's heart,
And, like an arrow which a god directs,
Flies back and wounds the archer. Through my heart
One fear doth chase another ; perhaps with rage,
Again on the unconsecrated shore,
The Furies' grisly band my brother seize.
Perchance they are surpris'd ! Methinks, I hear
The tread of armèd men. A messenger
Is coming from the king, with hasty steps.
How throbs my heart, how troubled is my soul,
Now that I gaze upon the face of one,
Whom with a word untrue I must encounter !

SCENE II.

IPHIGENIA, ARKAS.

ARKAS.

Priestess, with speed conclude the sacrifice !
Impatiently the king and people wait.

IPHIGENIA.

I had perform'd my duty and thy will,
Had not an unforeseen impediment
The execution of my purpose thwarted.

ARKAS.

What is it that obstructs the king's commands?

IPHIGENIA.

Chance, which from mortals will not brook control.

ARKAS.

Possess me with the reason, that with speed
I may inform the king, who hath decreed
The death of both.

IPHIGENIA.

The gods have not decreed it.
The elder of these men doth bear the guilt
Of kindred murder; on his steps attend
The dread Erinnys. In the inner fane
They seized upon their prey, polluting thus
The holy sanctuary. I hasten now,
Together with my virgin-train, to bathe
The goddess' image in the sea, and there
With solemn rites its purity restore.
Let none presume our silent march to follow!

ARKAS.

This hindrance to the monarch I'll announce:
Commence not thou the rite till he permit.

IPHIGENIA.

The priestess interferes alone in this.

ARKAS.

An incident so strange the king should know.

IPHIGENIA.

Here, nor his counsel nor command avails.

ARKAS.

Oft are the great consulted out of form.

IPHIGENIA.

Do not insist on what I must refuse.

ARKAS.

A needful and a just demand refuse not.

IPHIGENIA.

I yield, if thou delay not.

ARKAS.

I with speed
Will bear these tidings to the camp, and soon
Acquaint thee, priestess, with the king's reply.
There is a message I would gladly bear him ;
'Twould quickly banish all perplexity :
Thou didst not heed thy faithful friend's advice.

IPHIGENIA.

I willingly have done whate'er I could.

ARKAS.

E'en now 'tis not too late to change thy purpose.

IPHIGENIA.

To do so is, alas, beyond our power.

ARKAS.

What thou wouldst shun, thou deem'st impossible.

IPHIGENIA.

Thy wish doth make thee deem it possible.

ARKAS.

Wilt thou so calmly venture everything?

IPHIGENIA.

My fate I have committed to the gods.

ARKAS.

The gods are wont to save by human means.

IPHIGENIA.

By their appointment everything is done.

ARKAS.

Believe me, all doth now depend on thee.
The irritated temper of the king
Alone condemns these men to bitter death.
The soldiers from the cruel sacrifice
And bloody service long have been disused;
Nay, many, whom their adverse fortunes cast
In foreign regions, there themselves have felt
How godlike to the exil'd wanderer
The friendly countenance of man appears.
Do not deprive us of thy gentle aid!
With ease thou canst thy sacred task fulfil;
For nowhere doth benignity, which comes
In human form from heaven, so quickly gain
An empire o'er the heart, as where a race,
Gloomy and savage, full of life and power,
Without external guidance, and oppress'd
With vague forebodings, bear life's heavy load.

IPHIGENIA.

Shake not my spirit, which thou canst not bend
According to thy will.

ARKAS.

While there is time,
Nor labour nor persuasion shall be spar'd.

IPHIGENIA.

Thy labour but occasions pain to me;
Both are in vain; therefore, I pray, depart.

ARKAS.

I summon pain to aid me, 'tis a friend
Who counsels wisely.

IPHIGENIA.

Though it shakes my soul,
It doth not banish thence my strong repugnance.

ARKAS.

Can then a gentle soul repugnance feel
For benefits bestow'd by one so noble?

IPHIGENIA.

Yes, when the donor, for those benefits,
Instead of gratitude, demands myself.

ARKAS.

Who no affection feels doth never want
Excuses. To the king I will relate
What hath befallen. O that in thy soul
Thou wouldst revolve his noble conduct to thee
Since thy arrival to the present day!

SCENE III.

IPHIGENIA (*alone*).

These words at an unseasonable hour
Produce a strong revulsion in my breast;
I am alarm'd!—For as the rushing tide
In rapid currents eddies o'er the rocks
Which lie among the sand upon the shore;
E'en so a stream of joy o'erwhelm'd my soul.
I grasp'd what had appear'd impossible.
It was as though another gentle cloud
Around me lay, to raise me from the earth,
And rock my spirit in the same sweet sleep
Which the kind goddess shed around my brow,
What time her circling arm from danger snatched me,
My brother forcibly engross'd my heart;
I listen'd only to his friend's advice;
My soul rush'd eagerly to rescue them,
And as the mariner with joy surveys
The less'ning breakers of a desert isle,
So Tauris lay behind me. But the voice
Of faithful Arkas wakes me from my dream,
Reminding me that those whom I forsake
Are also men. Deceit doth now become
Doubly detested. O my soul, be still!
Beginn'st thou now to tremble and to doubt?
Thy lonely shelter on the firm-set earth
Must thou abandon? and, embark'd once more,
At random drift upon tumultuous waves,
A stranger to thyself and to the world?

SCENE IV.

IPHIGENIA, PYLADES.

PYLADES.

Where is she? that my words with speed may tell
The joyful tidings of our near escape!

IPHIGENIA.

Oppress'd with gloomy care, I much require
The certain comfort thou dost promise me.

PYLADES.

Thy brother is restor'd! The rocky paths
Of this unconsecrated shore we trod
In friendly converse, while behind us lay,
Unmark'd by us, the consecrated grove;
And ever with increasing glory shone
The fire of youth around his noble brow.
Courage and hope his glowing eye inspir'd;
And his exultant heart resigned itself
To the delight, the joy, of rescuing
Thee, his deliverer, also me, his friend.

IPHIGENIA.

The gods shower blessings on thee, Pylades!
And from those lips which breathe such welcome news,
Be the sad note of anguish never heard!

PYLADES.

I bring yet more,—for Fortune, like a prince,
Comes not alone, but well accompanied.
Our friends and comrades we have also found.
Within a bay they had conceal'd the ship,
And mournful sat expectant. They beheld
Thy brother, and a joyous shout uprais'd,
Imploring him to haste the parting hour.
Each hand impatient long'd to grasp the oar,
While from the shore a gently murmuring breeze,
Perceiv'd by all, unfurl'd its wing auspicious.
Let us then hasten; guide me to the fane,

That I may tread the sanctuary, and win
With sacred awe the goal of our desires.
I can unaided on my shoulder bear
The goddess' image: how I long to feel
The precious burden!

*(While speaking the last words, he approaches the Temple,
without perceiving that he is not followed by IPHIGENIA:
at length he turns round.)*

Why thus lingering stand?
Why art thou silent? wherefore thus confus'd?
Doth some new obstacle oppose our bliss?
Inform me, hast thou to the king announc'd
The prudent message we agreed upon?

IPHIGENIA.

I have, dear Pylades; yet wilt thou chide.
Thy very aspect is a mute approach.
The royal messenger arriv'd, and I,
According to thy counsel, fram'd my speech.
He seem'd surpris'd, and urgently besought,
That to the monarch I should first announce
The rite unusual, and attend his will.
I now await the messenger's return.

PYLADES.

Danger again doth hover o'er our heads!
Alas! Why hast thou failed to shroud thyself
Within the veil of sacerdotal rites?

IPHIGENIA.

I never have employ'd them as a veil.

PYLADES.

Pure soul! thy scruples will destroy alike
Thyself and us. Why did I not forsee
Such an emergency, and tutor thee
This counsel also wisely to elude?

IPHIGENIA.

Chide only me, for mine alone the blame.
Yet other answer could I not return

To him, who strongly and with reason urged
What my own heart acknowledg'd to be right.

PYLADES.

The danger thickens ; but let us be firm,
Nor with incautious haste betray ourselves ;
Calmly await the messenger's return,
And then stand fast, whatever his reply :
For the appointment of such sacred rites
Doth to the priestess, not the king belong.
Should he demand the stranger to behold,
Who is by madness heavily oppress'd,
Evasively pretend, that in the fane,
Well guarded, thou retainest him and me.
Thus you secure us time to fly with speed,
Bearing the sacred treasure from this race,
Unworthy its possession. Phœbus sends
Auspicious omens, and fulfils his word,
Ere we the first conditions have perform'd.
Free is Orestes, from the curse absolv'd !
Oh, with the freed one, to the rocky isle
Where dwells the god, waft us, propitious gales.
Thence to Mycene, that she may revive ;
That from the ashes of the extinguish'd hearth,
The household gods may joyously arise,
And beauteous fire illumine their abode !
Thy hand from golden censers first shall strew
The fragrant incense. O'er that threshold thou
Shalt life and blessing once again dispense,
The curse atone, and all thy kindred grace
With the fresh bloom of renovated life.

IPHIGENIA.

As doth the flower revolve to meet the sun,
Once more my spirit to sweet comfort turns,
Struck by thy words' invigorating ray.
How dear the counsel of a present friend,
Lacking whose godlike power, the lonely one
In silence droops ! for, lock'd within his breast,
Slowly are ripen'd purpose and resolve,
Which friendship's genial warmth had soon matur'd.

PYLADES.

Farewell! I haste to re-assure our friends,
Who anxiously await us: then with speed
I will return, and, hid within the brake,
Attend thy signal.—Wherefore, all at once,
Doth anxious thought o'ercloud thy brow serene?

IPHIGENIA.

Forgive me! As light clouds athwart the sun,
So cares and fears float darkling o'er my soul.

PYLADES.

Oh, banish fear! With danger it hath form'd
A close alliance,—they are constant friends.

IPHIGENIA.

It is an honest scruple, which forbids
That I should cunningly deceive the king,
And plunder him who was my second father.

PYLADES.

Him thou dost fly, who would have slain thy brother.

IPHIGENIA.

To me, at least, he hath been ever kind.

PYLADES.

What Fate commands is not ingratitude.

IPHIGENIA.

Alas! it still remains ingratitude;
Necessity alone can justify it.

PYLADES.

Thee, before gods and men, it justifies.

IPHIGENIA.

But my own heart is still unsatisfied.

PYLADES.

Scruples too rigid are a cloak for pride.

IPHIGENIA.

I cannot argue, I can only feel.

PYLADES.

Conscious of right, thou shouldst respect thyself.

IPHIGENIA.

Then only doth the heart know perfect ease,
When not a stain pollutes it.

PYLADES.

In this fane
Pure hast thou kept thy heart. Life teaches us
To be less strict with others and ourselves;
Thou'lt learn the lesson too. So wonderful
Is human nature, and its varied ties
Are so involv'd and complicate, that none
May hope to keep his inmost spirit pure,
And walk without perplexity through life.
Nor are we call'd upon to judge ourselves;
With circumspection to pursue his path,
Is the immediate duty of a man;
For seldom can he rightly estimate,
Or his past conduct or his present deeds.

IPHIGENIA.

Almost thou dost persuade me to consent.

PYLADES.

Needs there persuasion when no choice is granted?
To save thyself, thy brother, and a friend,
One path presents itself, and canst thou ask
If we shall follow it?

IPHIGENIA.

Still let me pause,
For such injustice thou couldst not thyself
Calmly return for benefits receiv'd.

PYLADES.

If we should perish, bitter self-reproach,
Forerunner of despair, will be thy portion.

It seems thou art not used to suffer much,
When, to escape so great calamity,
Thou canst refuse to utter one false word.

IPHIGENIA.

Oh, that I bore within a manly heart!
Which, when it hath conceiv'd a bold resolve,
'Gainst every other voice doth close itself.

PYLADES.

In vain thou dost refuse; with iron hand
Necessity commands; her stern decree
Is law supreme, to which the gods themselves
Must yield submission. In dread silence rules
The uncounsell'd sister of eternal fate.
What she appoints thee to endure,—endure;
What to perform,—perform. The rest thou knowest.
Ere long I will return, and then receive
The seal of safety from thy sacred hand.

SCENE V.

IPHIGENIA (*alone*).

I must obey him, for I see my friends
Beset with peril. Yet my own sad fate
Doth with increasing anguish move my heart.
May I no longer feed the silent hope
Which in my solitude I fondly cherish'd?
Shall the dire curse eternally endure?
And shall our fated race ne'er rise again
With blessings crown'd?—All mortal things decay!
The noblest powers, the purest joys of life
At length subside: then wherefore not the curse?
And have I vainly hoped that, guarded here,
Secluded from the fortunes of my race,
I, with pure heart and hands, some future day
Might cleanse the deep defilement of our house?
Scarce was my brother in my circling arms
From raging madness suddenly restor'd,
Scarce had the ship, long pray'd for, near'd the strand.

Once more to waft me to my native shores,
When unrelenting fate, with iron hand,
A double crime enjoins; commanding me
To steal the image, sacred and rever'd,
Confided to my care, and him deceive
To whom I owe my life and destiny.
Let not abhorrence spring within my heart!
Nor the old Titan's hate, toward you, ye gods
Infix its vulture talons in my breast!
Save me and save your image in my soul!

An ancient song comes back upon mine ear—
I had forgotten it, and willingly—
The Parca's song, which horribly they sang,
What time, hurl'd headlong from his golden seat,
Fell Tantalus. They with their noble friend
Keen anguish suffer'd; savage was their breast
And horrible their song. In days gone by,
When we were children, oft our ancient nurse
Would sing it to us, and I mark'd it well.

Oh, fear the immortals,
Ye children of men!
Eternal dominion
They hold in their hands,
And o'er their wide empire
Wield absolute sway.

Whom they have exalted
Let him fear them most!
Around golden tables,
On cliffs and clouds resting
The seats are prepar'd.

If contest ariseth;
The guests are hurl'd headlong.
Disgrac'd and dishonour'd,
To gloomy abysses,
And fetter'd in darkness,
Await with vain longing,
A juster decree.

But in feasts everlasting,
Around the gold tables
Still dwell the immortals.
From mountain to mountain
They stride; while ascending
From fathomless chasms,
The breath of the Titans,
Half-stifled with anguish,
Like volumes of incense
Fumes up to the skies.

From races ill-fated,
Their aspect joy-bringing,
Oft turn the celestials,
And shun in the children
To gaze on the features
Once lov'd and still speaking
Of their mighty sire.

So chanted the Parcæ;
The banish'd one hearkens
The song, the hoar captive
Immur'd in his dungeon,
His children's doom ponders,
And boweth his head.

ACT V.

SCENE I.

THOAS, ARKAS.

ARKAS.

I own I am perplex'd, and scarcely know
'Gainst whom to point the shaft of my suspicion,
Whether the priestess aids the captives' flight,
Or they themselves clandestinely contrive it.
'Tis rumour'd that the ship which brought them here
Is lurking somewhere in a bay conceal'd.

This stranger's madness, these new lustral rites,
The specious pretext for delay, excite
Mistrust, and call aloud for vigilance.

THOAS.

Summon the priestess to attend me here!
Then go with speed, and strictly search the shore,
From yonder headland to Diana's grove:
Forbear to violate its sacred depths,
A watchful ambush set, attack and seize,
According to your wont, whome'er ye find.

(ARKAS retires.)

SCENE II.

THOAS (*alone*).

Fierce anger rages in my riven breast,
First against her, whom I esteemed so pure;
Then 'gainst myself, whose foolish lenity
Hath fashion'd her for treason. Man is soon
Inur'd to slavery, and quickly learns
Submission, when of freedom quite depriv'd.
If she had fallen in the savage hands
Of my rude sires, and had their holy rage
Forborne to slay her, grateful for her life,
She would have recogniz'd her destiny,
Have shed before the shrine the stranger's blood,
And duty nam'd what was necessity.
Now my forbearance in her breast allures
Audacious wishes. Vainly I had hoped
To bind her to me; rather she contrives
To shape an independent destiny.
She won my heart through flattery; and now
That I oppose her, seeks to gain her ends
By fraud and cunning, and my kindness deems
A worthless and prescriptive property.

SCENE III.

IPHIGENIA, THOAS.

IPHIGENIA.

Me hast thou summon'd? wherefore art thou here?

THOAS.

Wherefore delay the sacrifice? inform me.

IPHIGENIA.

I have acquainted Arkas with the reasons.

THOAS.

From thee I wish to hear them more at large.

IPHIGENIA.

The goddess for reflection grants thee time.

THOAS.

To thee this time seems also opportune.

IPHIGENIA.

If to this cruel deed thy heart is steel'd,
Thou shouldst not come! A king who meditates
A deed inhuman, may find slaves enow.
Willing for hire to bear one half the curse,
And leave the monarch's presence undefil'd.
Enrapt in gloomy clouds he forges death,
Flaming destruction then his ministers
Hurl down upon his wretched victim's head;
While he abideth high above the storm,
Calm and untroubled, an impassive god.

THOAS.

A wild song, priestess, issued from thy lips.

IPHIGENIA.

No priestess, king! but Agamemnon's daughter;
While yet unknown, thou didst respect my words:
A princess now,—and think'st thou to command me?
From youth I have been tutor'd to obey,

My parents first and then the deity ;
And thus obeying, ever hath my soul
Known sweetest freedom. But nor then nor now
Have I been taught compliance with the voice
And savage mandates of a man.

THOAS.

Not I,
An ancient law doth thy obedience claim.

IPHIGENIA.

Our passions eagerly catch hold of laws
Which they can wield as weapons. But to me
Another law, one far more ancient, speaks
And doth command me to withstand thee, king !
That law declaring sacred every stranger.

THOAS.

These men, methinks, lie very near thy heart,
When sympathy with them can lead thee thus
To violate discretion's primal law,
That those in power should never be provok'd.

IPHIGENIA.

Speaking or silent, thou canst always know
What is, and ever must be, in my heart.
Doth not remembrance of a common doom,
To soft compassion melt the hardest heart ?
How much more mine ! in them I see myself.
I trembling kneel'd before the altar once,
And solemnly the shade of early death
Environ'd me. Aloft the knife was rais'd
To pierce my bosom, throbbing with warm life ;
A dizzy horror overwhelm'd my soul ;
My eyes grew dim ;—I found myself in safety.
Are we not bound to render the distress'd
The gracious kindness from the gods receiv'd ?
Thou know'st we are, and yet wilt thou compel me ?

THOAS.

Obey thine office, priestess, not the king.

IPHIGENIA.

Cease! nor thus seek to cloak the savage force
Which triumphs o'er a woman's feebleness.
Though woman, I am born as free as man.
Did Agamemnon's son before thee stand,
And thou requiredst what became him not,
His arm and trusty weapon would defend
His bosom's freedom. I have only words;
But it becomes a noble-minded man
To treat with due respect the words of woman.

THOAS.

I more respect them than a brother's sword.

IPHIGENIA.

Uncertain ever is the chance of arms,
No prudent warrior doth despise his foe;
Nor yet defenceless 'gainst severity
Hath nature left the weak; she gives him craft
And wily cunning; artful he delays,
Evades, eludes, and finally escapes.
Such arms are justified by violence.

THOAS.

But circumspection countervails deceit.

IPHIGENIA.

Which a pure spirit doth abhor to use.

THOAS.

Do not incautiously condemn thyself.

IPHIGENIA.

Oh, couldst thou see the struggle of my soul,
Courageously to ward the first attack
Of an unhappy doom, which threatens me!
Do I then stand before thee weaponless?
Prayer, lovely prayer, fair branch in woman's hand,
More potent far than instruments of war,
Thou dost thrust back. What now remains for me

Wherewith my inborn freedom to defend?
Must I implore a miracle from heaven?
Is there no power within my spirit's depths?

THOAS.

Extravagant thy interest in the fate
Of these two strangers. Tell me who they are
For whom thy heart is thus so deeply mov'd.

IPHIGENIA.

They are—they seem at least—I think them Greeks.

THOAS.

Thy countrymen; no doubt they have renew'd
The pleasing picture of return.

IPHIGENIA (*after a pause*).

Doth man

Lay undisputed claim to noble deeds?
Doth he alone to his heroic breast
Clasp the impossible? What call we great?
What deeds, though oft narrated, still uplift
With shuddering horror the narrator's soul,
But those which, with improbable success,
The valiant have attempted? Shall the man
Who all alone steals on his foes by night,
And raging like an unexpected fire,
Destroys the slumbering host, and press'd at length
By rous'd opponents on his foemen's steeds,
Retreats with booty—be alone extoll'd?
Or he who, scorning safety, boldly roams
Through woods and dreary wilds, to scour the land
Of thieves and robbers? Is naught left for us?
Must gentle woman quite forego her nature,
Force against force employ,—like Amazons,
Usurp the sword from man, and bloodily
Revenge oppression? In my heart I feel
The stirrings of a noble enterprize;
But if I fail—severe reproach, alas!
And bitter misery will be my doom.
Thus on my knees I supplicate the gods!

Oh, are ye truthful, as men say ye are,
Now prove it by your countenance and aid;
Honour the truth in me! Attend, O king!
A secret plot deceitfully is laid;
Touching the captives thou dost ask in vain;
They have departed hence and seek their friends,
Who, with the ship, await them on the shore.
The eldest,—whom dire madness lately seiz'd,
And hath abandon'd now,—he is Orestes,
My brother, and the other Pylades,
His early friend and faithful confidant.
From Delphi, Phœbus sent them to this shore
With a divine command to steal away
The image of Diana, and to him
Bear back the sister thither, and for this
He promised to the blood-stained matricide,
The Fury-haunted son, deliverance.
I have surrender'd now into thy hands
The remnants of the house of Tantalus.
Destroy us—if thou canst.

THOAS.

And dost thou think
That the uncultured Scythian will attend
The voice of truth and of humanity
Which Atreus, the Greek, heard not?

IPHIGENIA.

'Tis heard
By every one, born 'neath whatever clime,
Within whose bosom flows the stream of life,
Pure and unhinder'd.—What thy thought? O king,
What silent purpose broods in thy deep soul?
Is it destruction? Let me perish first!
For now, deliverance hopeless, I perceive
The dreadful peril into which I have
With rash precipitancy plung'd my friends.
Alas! I soon shall see them bound before me!
How to my brother shall I say farewell?
I, the unhappy author of his death.
Ne'er can I gaze again in his dear eyes!

THOAS.

The traitors have contrived a cunning web,
And cast it round thee, who, secluded long,
Giv'st willing credence to thine own desires.

IPHIGENIA.

No, no! I'd pledge my life these men are true.
And shouldst thou find them otherwise, O king,
Then let them perish both, and cast me forth,
That on some rock-girt island's dreary shore
I may atone my folly. Are they true,
And is this man indeed my dear Orestes,
My brother, long implor'd,—release us both,
And o'er us stretch the kind protecting arm,
Which long hath shelter'd me. My noble sire
Fell through his consort's guilt,—she by her son;
On him alone the hope of Atreus' race
Doth now repose. Oh, with pure heart, pure hand,
Let me depart to purify our house.
Yes, thou wilt keep thy promise; thou didst swear,
That were a safe return provided me,
I should be free to go. The hour is come.
A king doth never grant like common men,
Merely to gain a respite from petition;
Nor promise what he hopes will ne'er be claim'd.
Then first he feels his dignity supreme
When he can make the long-expecting happy.

THOAS.

As fire opposes water, and doth seek
With hissing rage to overcome its foe,
So doth my anger strive against thy words.

IPHIGENIA.

Let mercy, like the consecrated flame
Of silent sacrifice, encircled round
With songs of gratitude, and joy, and praise,
Above the tumult gently rise to heaven.

THOAS.

How often hath this voice assuag'd my soul?

IPHIGENIA.

Extend thy hand to me in sign of peace.

THOAS.

Large thy demand within so short a time.

IPHIGENIA.

Beneficence doth no reflection need.

THOAS.

'Tis needed oft, for evil springs from good.

IPHIGENIA.

'Tis doubt which good doth oft to evil turn.
Consider not; act as thy feelings prompt thee.

SCENE IV.

ORESTES (*armed*), IPHIGENIA, THOAS.ORESTES (*addressing his followers*).

Redouble your exertions! hold them back!
Few moments will suffice; maintain your ground,
And keep a passage open to the ship
For me and for my sister.

(*To IPHIGENIA, without perceiving THOAS.*)

Come with speed!

We are betray'd,—brief time remains for flight.

(*He perceives the king.*)

THOAS (*laying his hand on his sword*).

None in my presence with impunity
His naked weapon wears.

IPHIGENIA.

Do not profane

Diana's sanctuary with rage and blood.
Command your people to forbear awhile,
And listen to the priestess, to the sister.

ORESTES.

Say, who is he that threatens us?

IPHIGENIA.

In him
Revere the king, who was my second father.
Forgive me, brother, that my childlike heart
Hath plac'd our fate thus wholly in his hands.
I have betray'd your meditated flight,
And thus from treachery redeem'd my soul.

ORESTES.

Will he permit our peaceable return?

IPHIGENIA.

Thy gleaming sword forbids me to reply.

ORESTES (*sheathing his sword*).

Then speak! thou seest I listen to thy words.

SCENE V.

ORESTES, IPHIGENIA, THOAS.

Enter PYLADES, soon after him ARKAS, both with drawn swords.

PYLADES.

Do not delay! our friends are putting forth
Their final strength, and yielding step by step,
Are slowly driven backward to the sea.—
A conference of princes find I here?
Is this the sacred person of the king?

ARKAS.

Calmly, as doth become thee, thou dost stand,
O king, surrounded by thine enemies.
Soon their temerity shall be chastis'd;
Their yielding followers fly,—their ship is ours,
Speak but the word and it is wrapt in flames.

THOAS.

Go, and command my people to forbear!
Let none annoy the foe while we confer. (*ARKAS retires.*)

ORESTES.

I willingly consent. Go, Pylades!
Collect the remnant of our friends, and wait
The appointed issue of our enterprise.

(PYLADES *retires.*)

SCENE VI.

IPHIGENIA, THOAS, ORESTES.

IPHIGENIA.

Relieve my cares ere ye begin to speak.
I fear contention, if thou wilt not hear
The voice of equity, O king,—if thou
Wilt not, my brother, curb thy headstrong youth.

THOAS.

I, as becomes the elder, check my rage.
Now answer me: how dost thou prove thyself
The priestess' brother, Agamemnon's son?

ORESTES.

Behold the sword with which the hero slew
The valiant Trojans. From his murderer
I took the weapon, and implor'd the Gods
To grant me Agamemnon's mighty arm,
Success, and valour, with a death more noble.
Select one of the leaders of thy host,
And place the best as my opponent here.
Where'er on earth the sons of heroes dwell,
This boon is to the stranger ne'er refus'd.

THOAS.

This privilege hath ancient custom here
To strangers ne'er accorded.

ORESTES.

Then from us
Commence the novel custom! A whole race
In imitation soon will consecrate
Its monarch's noble action into law.

Nor let me only for our liberty,—
Let me, a stranger, for all strangers fight.
If I should fall, my doom be also theirs;
But if kind fortune crown me with success,
Let none e'er tread this shore, and fail to meet
The beaming eye of sympathy and love,
Or unconsol'd depart!

THOAS.

Thou dost not seem
Unworthy of thy boasted ancestry.
Great is the number of the valiant men
Who wait upon me; but I will myself,
Although advanc'd in years, oppose the foe,
And am prepar'd to try the chance of arms.

IPHIGENIA.

No, no! such bloody proofs are not requir'd.
Unhand thy weapon, king! my lot consider;
Rash combat oft immortalizes man;
If he should fall, he is renown'd in song;
But after ages reckon not the tears
Which ceaseless the forsaken woman sheds;
And poets tell not of the thousand nights
Consum'd in weeping, and the dreary days,
Wherein her anguish'd soul, a prey to grief,
Doth vainly yearn to call her lov'd one back.
Fear warn'd me to beware lest robbers' wiles
Might lure me from this sanctuary, and then
Betray me into bondage. Anxiously
I question'd them, each circumstance explor'd,
Demanded proofs, now is my heart assur'd.
See here, the mark on his right hand impress'd
As of three stars, which on his natal day
Were by the priest declar'd to indicate
Some dreadful deed therewith to be perform'd.
And then this scar, which doth his eyebrow cleave,
Redoubles my conviction. When a child,
Electra, rash and inconsiderate,
Such was her nature, loos'd him from her arms,
He fell against a tripos. Oh, 'tis he!—

Shall I adduce the likeness to his sire,
Or the deep rapture of my inmost heart,
In further token of assurance, king?

THOAS.

E'en though thy words had banish'd every doubt,
And I had curb'd the anger in my breast,
Still must our arms decide. I see no peace.
Their purpose, as thou didst thyself confess,
Was to deprive me of Diana's image.
And think ye I will look contented on ?
The Greeks are wont to cast a longing eye
Upon the treasures of barbarians,
A golden fleece, good steeds, or daughters fair ;
But force and guile not always have avail'd
To lead them, with their booty, safely home.

ORESTES.

The image shall not be a cause of strife !
We now perceive the error which the God,
Our journey here commanding, like a veil,
Threw o'er our minds. His counsel I implor'd,
To free me from the Furies' grisly band.
He answer'd, "Back to Greece the sister bring,
Who in the sanctuary on Tauris' shore
Unwillingly abides ; so ends the curse !"
To Phœbus' sister we applied the words,
And he referr'd to thee ! The bonds severe,
Which held thee from us, holy one, are rent,
And thou art ours once more. At thy blest touch,
I felt myself restor'd. Within thine arms,
Madness once more around me coil'd its folds,
Crushing the marrow in my frame, and then
For ever, like a serpent, fled to hell.
Through thee, the daylight gladdens me anew.
The counsel of the Goddess now shines forth
In all its beauty and beneficence.
Like to a sacred image, unto which
An oracle immutably hath bound
A city's welfare, thee she bore away,
Protectress of our house, and guarded here

Within this holy stillness, to become
 A blessing to thy brother and thy race.
 Now when each passage to escape seems clos'd,
 And safety hopeless, thou dost give us all.
 O king, incline thine heart to thoughts of peace!
 Let her fulfil her mission, and complete
 The consecration of our father's house,
 Me to their purified abode restore,
 And place upon my brow the ancient crown!
 Requite the blessing which her presence brought thee,
 And let me now my nearer right enjoy!
 Cunning and force, the proudest boast of man,
 Fade in the lustre of her perfect truth;
 Nor unrequited will a noble mind
 Leave confidence, so childlike and so pure.

IPHIGENIA.

Think on thy promise; let thy heart be mov'd
 By what a true and honest tongue hath spoken!
 Look on us, king! an opportunity
 For such a noble deed not oft occurs.
 Refuse thou canst not,—give thy quick consent.

THOAS.

Then go!

IPHIGENIA.

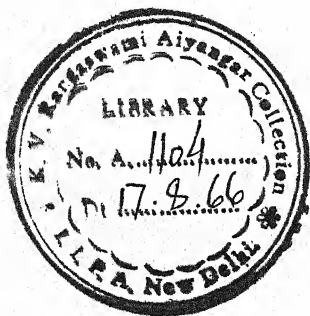
Not so, my king! I cannot part
 Without thy blessing, or in anger from thee,
 Banish us not! the sacred right of guests
 Still let us claim: so not eternally
 Shall we be sever'd. Honour'd and belov'd
 As mine own father was, art thou by me:
 And this impression in my soul abides,
 Let but the least among thy people bring
 Back to mine ear the tones I heard from thee,
 Or should I on the humblest see thy garb,
 I will with joy receive him as a god,
 Prepare his couch myself, beside our hearth
 Invite him to a seat, and only ask
 Touching thy fate and thee. Oh, may the gods
 To thee the merited reward impart

Of all thy kindness and benignity!
Farewell! O turn thou not away, but give
One kindly word of parting in return!
So shall the wind more gently swell our sails,
And from our eyes with soften'd anguish flow,
The tears of separation. Fare thee well!
And graciously extend to me thy hand,
In pledge of ancient friendship.

THOAS (*extending his hand*).

Fare thee well!

THE END.



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